■ Business / B1 — Globe's Ablaza best Asian telecom CEO
■ Sports / A17 — NBA: Detroit whips Lakers; Billups MVP
■ Motoring — Cita Beltran owns RP's first car
■ Metro / A15 — Rash of bombings baffles police
■ World / A8 — US survey: 90% of Iraqis want US out
■ Entertainment — PSM not enough to make me shut up, says Phillip's ex

Imelda asks court to stop showing of 'Imelda' film

ANYWHERE but here.

Imelda Marcos asked the Makati Regional Trial Court yesterday to keep a documentary about her off the country's movie screens.

The film, titled "Imelda," premiered in January at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, where it was awarded the prize for Best Documentary Cinematography. It has since been

(Details in A2)

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PDI correspondent wins Asia journalism award

THE PHILIPPINE Daily Inquirer's correspondent in Palawan Joibelle T. Tesorio recently won second prize in the first Developing Asia Journalism Awards (Dajta) held at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan in Tokyo.

Tesorio won second prize in the category of "Role of the Private Sector in Development" for her article, "Cyanide Fishing Runs

(Details in A2)

ENRILENAN: The nose with the gavel is the less wiley.

ARROYO: If you are dissatisfied with the proceedings, then you might as well walk out now.

SOTTO: Why are you daring us to walk out? Are you looking for trouble?

ANGARA: A broken gavel is a bad omen of things to come.

Walk out, FPJ allies dared

Pro-GMA solons firm on not opening election returns

By Cynthia D. Balana Christine O. Avendaño

SO FRENZIED were the exchanges that the head of the gavel flew when Senate Majority Leader Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan slammed it down in an attempt to quell pandemo.

Weekends of things became, a ritual session stripped

As the rhetoric gained, lawmakers for and against the administration bitterly hurled denunciations and taunts at each other yesterday on the ninth day of the congressional canvassing of the votes for president and vice president.

About the only thing that was not thrown during the televised session was a punch.

And, for the first time, too, talk of an opposition walkout rang out in the session hall.

"If your frame of mind is such that if you are dissatisfied with the proceedings you will walk out, then you might as well walk out now," Sen. Joker Arroyo said, as though challenging the opposition team.

Sen. Vicente Sotto III bristled.

"It is like you are daring us to walk out," the campaign manager of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. fired. "Why? ... Are you looking for trouble?"

Both sides said: "Can you imagine what would happen if the whole minority would walk out? You will not have a quorum in the future. And will you bear scientific canvassing?"

"We have no plan to walk out," Sotto added.

(Details in A2)

Reforming political system No. 1 task

REFORMING a political system that serves as a clog on economic growth could be the most important task facing the winner of the hotly contested presidential election, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said yesterday.

Apart from the short-term challenge of easing dire economic and enduring debt, the country's next leader who will be sworn into office on June 30 should take steps to remove the "parochialism" provisions of the 1987 Constitution, Neri told a business breakfast forum.

"Politics stand in the way of growth. It's hard to do economic reform unless you reform politics," he said.

Neri cited a month after the May 10 vote, Congress has yet to proclaim the winner of the presidential contest, casting concerns over a potential constitutional crisis if the winner is not proclaimed before President Gloria

(Details in A2)

'Way Kurat' is going to America

By Carlito Pablo

"WAY KURAT" is going to America for the time time.

Comptroller Ridley Rep. Manuel Lamaro, endearing behavioral to fly his cute nickname as "Way Kurat" or the man who has no fear, is looking forward to the first trip abroad.

Lamaro, who holds a diplomatic passport, has never been abroad. "But even to Hong Kong, "he revealed.

(Details in A2)

Environmentalists, priests fight over mango tree

By Nel Cabreras

THE BATTLE over Metro Manila's trees has spilled onto "holy" ground.

Environmentalists are opposing a plan by a Catholic parish in Quezon City to cut down an old mango tree to make way for the construction of a seminary on its New Manila property.

Yet, a virtue lies.

But for this alliance of green activists, it is a symbol of the synod's dwindling semi-forests. It is ironic, they say, that most of the parish should be considering its death apart of "God's creation."

In a press conference yesterday, Odette Abastaras of Mother Earth Philippines said her group was prepared to hold "tree-ordeal" and even "swim to the Pope" to save the mango tree at the back of the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Shrine in Barangay Manresa.

"The group believes the tree is more than 50 years old.

Abastaras insisted that the seminary building could be redesigned in such a way that the tree would be saved.

Bingsil Clemente, also of Mother Earth, offered to map "tree friendly architects willing to consultant" all seminary plans.

"We are not against conserving initiatives in accordance with existing laws. We are against killing trees," she stressed, noting that some 200 parishioners have already filed a similar petition

GREY GOD can make a tree be prime of the Mt. Carmel Church in New Manila, Quezon City, even this 50-year-old mango tree (top) out of the way to build a seminary (above), a plan which environmentalists are opposing.

Key witnesses in tax scam get immunity

By Armand M. Nocum

COUPLE John and Benita Chingkee, two key witnesses in the P5.2 billion tax credit scam, were finally granted immunity by the Office of the Ombudsman, a move seen to speed up the resolution of the cases which have dragged on for six years now.

In exchange for their immunity, the Chingkee couple has promised to fully cooperate in the investigation of the tax scam allegedly perpetrated by Jolo Estrilor and seven co-law fraternity and Gloria Chingkee in collusion with top officials of the Department of Finance.

A TOR serves as proof of a company's claim to tax credits, which are granted either to exporting firms that are entitled to duty-free privileges or to those that have tax refunds.

The couple, who were earlier

(Details in A2)

AFP to start another bidding for 47,000 combat boots

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE ARMED Forces has yet to resolve the questionable award of a contract to a supplier of combat boots, but another bidding will soon be conducted for the supply of another 47,000 pairs of boots to the Philippine Army.

Peter Go Cheng, sales manager of Jaslan Enrique Industries, told the Inquirer that the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM) was probing through with the new bidding despite Procurement Managing Service's directive for a full-down inquiry into the alleged irregularity surrounding the earlier bidding that took place on May 4. Jaslan had lost the earlier contract to Filbest Marketing Corp.

Cheng said that on June 3, the PSDBM procurement body had awarded committee chaired by Ed. was the Epida conducted a pre-bid conference to inform prospective bidders of the military's specifications.

"We found this strange," he said, pointing out that the 4077 had hardly begun to probe into the earlier contract.

Cheng noted that the June 3 pre-bid conference was held just a day after Defense Undersecretary for Operations Edgardo Batonga directed the Department of National Defense's Office of Legal Affairs to look into the earlier contract.

Three parties—Jaslan, Goldfield Philippines and Gilmore Shoe

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2004

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Meralco to pursue rate hike

PULITZER PHOTO

FLAG-WAVING PRIDE Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Cheryl Diaz Meyer and President Macapagal pose with one of her photos during a photography exhibit at Ateneo de Manila University. The Blind Item Mr./Miss, who is here for the country's Independence Day celebrations, paid the President a courtesy call in Malacañang. Yesterday, she spoke before the Press Club of the Philippines (PPF) at the InterContinental Manila.

MALAMPAYA BONANZA

Palawan presses gov't on gas share

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE INCREASE government pledged to give 40 percent of the income from the Malampaya natural gas project in Palawan province, according to a January 19 letter by Energy Secretary Francisco Viray.

Viray said in the letter addressed to Palawan provincial officials on June 15, 1998, and Governor H. Barry Bagsic Jr. who acts as counsel for a group of Palawan residents involved in a legal battle with the national government for the province's share in the revenues from the project.

Bagsic said the national government had committed to pay the 40 percent to Palawan, but added that this has defaulted for the last seven years.

The Malampaya natural gas project, inaugurated in 2001, is expected to generate $15 billion in revenues over the next 20 years.

A 40 percent share would mean the province would get $3.06 billion, or more than P5.84 billion now.

Bagsic said the national government changed its stance when President Macapagal Arroyo came to power in January 2001.

In affected Palawan around 9000 million, claiming that the province was not entitled to 40 percent as it did not have territorial jurisdiction over the oil and gas fields which are located 80 km off the northwestern coast of the province.

On March 2003, the Palawan government filed a case before the Puerto Princesa regional court to compel the national government to recognize its legal and rightful share in the Malampaya project.

Bagsic said that it was no patriot Bolwart official from agreeing to the P800-million offer that led his group, the the Kilusan Lost Malampaya, to file a separate case before the Puerto Princesa regional court on June 3, 2004.

The petitioners asked the court to order the national government to give Palawan a 40 percent share of the revenues, which is in addition to the local government funds, and to declare as unconstitutional the claim of President Macapagal and other officials that Palawan's does not have jurisdiction over the projects.

The petition, whose signatories include former interior secretary Gene Santos and members of the Atlantic Lets Malampaya coalition, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong and Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin.

Bagsic said the government's arguments denying Palawan's penalty over the project "puts in grave peril the integrity of the country's territory and national patrimony," particularly the Philippines' claim in the Kalayaan, a group of islets in the South China Sea west of Palawan which are claimed in whole and in part by China and seven Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines.

He said this was because Palawan was the "strong and secure anchor" of the Philippines' claim to an extended continental shelf under the regime of the Law of the Sea which in turn supports its territorial claim in the Kalayaan Islands. The part of the Spratlys on which the Philippines has a claim contains the

FPJ leading destabilization, says Defensor

By Carlos Pablo

THE NOMINATION camp yesterday marked Fernando Poe Jr. as a "dangerous man" who is now personally "leading" a destabilization effort against the Macapagal administration.

"His statements and actions make him dangerous to the State," said Secretary Rafael Defensor, campaign spokesperson of Poe, the Macapagal-Arroyo.

Defensor was interviewed after a briefing with journalists covering the caravan by Congress, a day after the actor went the rounds of northern Metro Manila wherein he denounced the ongoing census.

Poe also said the mobilization of census takers included Lower Congress nor Isko and denies proclaiming the principal rival President Macapagal-Arroyo without will but upon the country's "fake" President.

"About a month ago, FPJ was not involved in any of these destabilization efforts," Defensor said in his briefing. "Now he's going around so he is not only knowingly supporting but leading the destabilization."

"His (Poe's) statement about a fake President is an irresponsible and dangerous statement," Defensor also said.

In a separate interview, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. said: "He (Poe) should not make inflammatory statements."

"He should not create an incendiary situation. The times are sensitive. We do not want to ignite any combustion," De Venecia said.

In a statement, Rep. Wilfredo Villaraza (Cebu), Balweed urged the people to dismiss the "scripted remarks" of the who told his supporters Tuesday that he won't surrender the fight for the presidency.

"He (Poe) sounded like a delusional deposed ruler in Palestine only to his true mind," said Villaraza, a close associate of Mr. Macapagal.

Villaraza said that Poe "seems to be setting the stage for a bigger plot against the government."

"Apparently, the King of Philippine movies is hell-bent on following his own script, democracy and our Constitution be damned," Villaraza said.

In his briefing, Defensor said that Poe would be better off if he "accepts that they lost" the May 10 elections.

"We are now just going through the formal process of proclamation," Defensor said.

By Aniqui L. Hu and Philip C. Tubeza

AFTER being rebuffed by the Supreme Court, the Lopez-owned Manila Electric Co. yesterday expressed optimism it could still get a much-needed rate hike.

"We're always optimistic. We're always hoping that we will get a break," Meralco president and chief operating officer Jesus Francisco said in a briefing yesterday.

Voting 8-5, the SC overruled the decision of the Energy Regulatory Commission in November to grant Meralco a 12-centavo per kilowatt-hour (kWh) rate increase, saying it was a "blatant encroachable" breach of the law.

"What makes the challenged order particularly repugnant is that it involves a blatant and inexcusable breach of the very rules which the ERC is mandated to observe and implement," the high court said in its ruling penned by Associate Justice Dante Tinga.

Francisco said Meralco may ask the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision.

Lawyer Ismael Khan Jr., head of the SC public information office, said Meralco has 15 days to appeal the SC ruling.

The 12-centavo rate hike is separate from the 13.25 centavos per kWh rate increase that Meralco is also asking consumers starting July 1.

ERC Chair Isidro Cruz said in a telephone interview yesterday that hearings for Meralco's rate hike petition would resume at the soonest possible time.

"Now that the decision is out, the ERC should now have the legal disposition (Meralco's) application for a rate increase. I've instructed our legal department to get all parties to agree to a common date when the hearings could be held," he said.

Francisco said the court's decision did not stop the ERC from granting the company a rate hike.

"The rate increase is still with the ERC. The hearings to be called by the ERC will determine whether the increase will be approved. The Supreme Court decision also upheld the authority of the ERC to issue provisional rate increases," he said.

No impact

While Meralco officials recognized that not getting the rate hike impacted on its capital expenditure program, they said it would be no impact on the company's earnings.

Meralco still expects its net profit to reach P1 billion this year despite the court ruling against a tariff hike.

Francisco said the company would still exceed its net profit last year of P907 million on the back of higher sales and an earlier rate hike that took effect middle of last year.

"We are profit growth because of the rate increase last year, plus the expected growth in energy sales," Francisco said.

In the first quarter, Meralco posted a net income of P604.4 million on operating revenues of P32.5 billion.

A net profit of P1 billion this year is a "workable target," added Meralco comptroller and senior vice president Manuel Taganas. "We did not put that into our target for the year," he said, referring to the rate issue.

Meralco vice president Ivanna dela Peña said the company was still on track to meeting its five-percent sales growth target for the year, as energy sales in the first four months rose by three percent against last year's figures.

She said that in April alone, sales grew by 3.2 percent, higher than that the company's projected growth rate for the year.

"Of course, a lot of factors will have to come into play for us to meet our growth target for the rest of the year, but we're still on track," she said.

She said the company was also expected to feel the full impact of an 8.68 centavos per kWh increase in rates that it had been enjoying since late last year after the ERC approved the unbundling of its rates.

Opposition

In its 62-page decision, the court said the ERC failed to consider and resolve a motion for production of documents and the supplemental petition it submitted before it approved the power rate hike.

The court said the ERC reached the decision without conducting a public hearing, thus preventing the public from opposing the rate.

The court had suspended Meralco's plan to implement a 12 centavos per kWh rate increase in January after receiving complaints from consumer groups, who said regulators had not conducted their duties authorizing Meralco's rate increase since 1994.

In reaction to the SC ruling, Meralco Alliance, convened in Filipinos, slumped 1.25 percent to P5.8 on Tuesday while Meralco B shares appreciated 1.5 percent to P5.65, lowest in P80.

Meralco, which supplies electricity to about four million households and businesses in Manila and surrounding provinces, had said the rate increase would enable it to accumulate an additional P1.9 billion in revenues this year.

Meralco also had been struggling with a P30-billion bond to construction for years of unbilling, which was ordered by the high to bond in November 2002.

The ruling comes just three days after the ERC ordered Meralco to pay a new refund to its customers for some P1.2 billion in money and service deposits.

Meralco, 25 percent owned by the government, will soon enjoy the fourth and final phase of its P30 billion refund scheme.

'Illegal collections'

Militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) welcomed the court's decision but urged the ERC to order Meralco to refund its "illegal collections" from December 2003 to Jan. 14, 2004 when the company started implementing the 8.68 centavos per kWh increase.

"The Supreme Court decision is a welcome relief for consumers who have long been cowering from unjust and arbitrary rate increases imposed by the big power monopolies," Bayan spokesperson Renato Reyes Jr. said in a statement yesterday.

While Bayan claimed that the amount the company collected had already reached P000 million, Francisco said it could not be more than P90 million. With reports from AFP dispatches

Barbers bid doubtful--Comelec

By Marlo Pilapil

THE COMMISSION on Elections has found that less than 29,000 voters remained unaccounted in the May elections, denying somewhat the basis for Sen. Robert Barbers' petition to have the proclamation of Sen. Rodolfo Biazon as the 12th senator short-annulled.

Comelec commissioner Resurreccion Borra said he will personally look into Barbers's claim as to Barbers' claim that more than 29,000 votes had yet to be canvassed from certain areas of Mindanao, Northern and Southern Luzon and the Visayas and from some municipalities where special elections were to be held.

Barbers believes that he could get enough votes from these areas to overturn Biazon's lead of 30,000.

"The claim seems not to be very accurate," Borra told reporters yesterday following the hearing over Barbers' petition.

The 1st Division, which is hearing the case, ordered the Comelec records opened to the public yesterday to allow Barbers' lawyers to submit their recommendations and data to support their competing claims before Friday for the scheduled hearing on Tuesday.

The issue has to be resolved before June 30, the day newly elected officials assume office.

Borra said that Barbers' camp should not be concerned that a study be conducted into the claim that more than 29,000 votes still had to be counted. He said field personnel made a tally of the special elections and the number of votes affected.

Barbers' position was further weakened when the Comelec, through commissioner Florentino Tuason, ruled that there would be no more special elections for Tinglayan, Kalinga.

Borra explained that the Comelec had twice attempted but failed to hold elections in the town. He said it was decided the results of the elections in some areas of Tinglayan would not affect the outcome of the local elections.

At the hearing yesterday, Biazon moved to have the Comelec dismiss the petition, claiming that Barbers had no legal standing over the case and that the number of votes being contested would not affect the proclamation.

"Based on the certificates of canvass by the Comelec, the 13,000 votes cannot be overcome even assuming that I got zero in the special elections ... Although I am not considering that I will get zero," said Biazon.

"I have the numbers. Even assuming I get zero, my lead will not be overturned," he said.

The Biazon camp pointed out that Barbers' claim that there were still 29,000 votes to be canvassed was misleading as it was based on the alleged number of registered voters, not the actual number of votes cast, as shown by the certificates of canvass from the areas.

Solar power for Puerto

PUERTO PRINCESA (CITY)—In the next few years, this city will host the biggest and most expensive solar-power plant in the world.

The 6.5-megawatt solar power plant, involving an investment of $100 million, will be built within 20-360 ha (500 in Barangay Sheppingdala here, according to Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

Hagedorn said that it was no patriot Bolwart official from agreeing to the P800-million offer

Aboitiz ESO-million will be initially funded by the Lasry Aaron Group, a California-based company under Chevron/Texaco Group, under a build-operate-transfer scheme.

The US-based Chevron/Texaco is part of the consortium consisting of the Royal Dutch Shell Group and the state-owned Philippine National Oil Co.—that operates the Camago-Malampaya natural gas project off the northwestern coastal of the province.

City administrator Agustin Bonoan Jr. said the solar power plant near the city's answer to the frequent brownouts and higher electricity rates.

He said the largest existing solar power plant located in Hawaii, Spain produces only 5 megawatts.

Hagedorn recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Larry Aaron, the company's owner. But businessmen said the city council "talked as satisfying the contract because of the huge amount involved. Aquilla P. Bueza, PDC Southern Luzon Bureau

JUSTICE FOR JUDGE

President Macapagal listens to Florencio Legaspi Tinaloc, widow of slain judge Antonio Tinaloc, during her visit to Malacañang to seek justice for her slain husband. The President assured her of a speedy investigation to solve the recent killing of Tinaloc and six other judges.

No new kidnapping upsurge, says GMA

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday assured members of the Chinese-Filipino community that there is no resurgence of kidnapping, saying that the "spectacular" performance of the government's anti-kidnapping task force had brought about the "lowest kidnapping rate in history."

"Despite the lonely political atmosphere of the past month, our law enforcers have been chalking up solid gains," the President said as she pinpointed nine suspected kidnappers, including the alleged mastermind in the kidnap-slaying of Dona Cola executive Jimy Chuidian.

Relatives of kidnap victims, including Sr.'s father, anti-crime crusader Teresita dog-lover and Chinese-Filipino business leaders attended the press conference, along with National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force head Angelo Reyes and Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane.

"Our achievements in the anti-kidnapping campaign have been remarkably consistent...overall, the results speak for themselves," Ms Macapagal said.

She said that since October 2003, 110 kidnap gang leaders and members, including 12 who were in the NAKF's "most wanted" list, have been arrested for. She said 96 of these were captured, nine surrendered and the others were killed when they resisted authorities.

Ms Macapagal singled out Jaime Lauren, the leader of the dreaded Wang-Wang kidnap-for-ransom gang, who carried a P1 million reward on his head and who was arrested in Quezon City on June 13.

The President said that in Ang Sio's book, Lauren was the No. 2 most wanted kidnapper for having allegedly masterminded the kidnapping of Sy and Cuanio Wang who were both killed.

Ms Macapagal also pointed to the kidnapper of the Chinese-Filipino businessman Sonny Lee in Baguio.

"The victim...have mentioned some of the names in their statements and I would like to assure the Chinese-Filipino community that if there are anxieties about a resurgence of kidnapping, we are on the ball and we shall cut down at the remnants of the remaining kidnap gangs to renewed lease helped decreasing," the President said.

"In fact, there is no resurgence. It's the smallest [kidnapping] rate in history," she said.

She said the steadfastness of the NAKF, the close surveillance and team police action and the high visibility patrol teams composed of police, military, the Metro Manila Development Authority and barangay assed were what helped bring kidnapping activities to an all-time low.

She also credited the "credible country system" and the cooperation of the victims' families with authorities.

"We shall bring justice to the victims of kidnapping. We shall strive to keep families physically and psychologically secure through robust vigilance," she said.

She congratulated Reyes, Ebdane and other security officials for their "spectacular" achievements.

Ang-Lee, who heads the Chinese Action Against Crime group, recalled how Wang was kidnapped and slain, with her family being given only one day to come up with the ransom money.

"They were starting the negotiations and ransom was already offered but this guy Teodoy Lacuna, thought that the P200,000 could offer was too petty, too small and he ordered the slaying of Cuanio Wang. Three kids lost their mother," she said.

"We can no longer bring back those lives but at least the families will have a closure with the arrest of the one responsible for organizing this Wang-Wang group. [It gives them] some comfort that at long last, they may find justice with the help of the justice department and the courts. The victims' families have promised to cooperate fully until these people are put to death by] lethal injection," she said.

Peso close to all-time low

THE PESO slipped to a 45-week low yesterday amid persistent political and economic concerns adding fears scrubby in the congressional vote count for the May 10 presidential race, dealers said.

The peso finished at 56.22 to the dollar, just off the record low set of 56.45 on March 23.

Dealers blamed a spate of bad news for the peso's weakness, including the the government's controversial plan to absorb P300-billion in debt at the National Power Corp. as well as a sharp rise in the inflation rate in April.

Adding to anxiety were threats by legislators allied to opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. to withdraw on the ongoing congressional vote tally, raising speculation that a coup may be in the offing against incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The news that has been coming out is not too encouraging both on the political and economic fronts," said Union Bank of the Philippines senior trader Ilexis de Guzman.

Trade "indicates the market has been very jittery and that no one would want to be caught short on the US dollar," he said.

Mahathang's spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the government has to absorb the state utility's debts to clear the way for the privatization of the country's power generation assets.

Analysts said the move is expected to further blow the country's budget deficit. The Philippines' unemployment rate as of end-April rose to 13.7 percent from 12.1 percent a year earlier, its highest level in two years, the National Statistics Office (NSO) said.

"It could be anywhere for the peso in the next trading sessions," one local bank dealer said.

The central bank was initially seen in the market, defending the peso at the 56.00 level, dealers said. AFP

Walk out, FPJ allies dared

Front page A1

Trying to cool tempers, Senate Majority Leader Francisco "Kiko" Pangilinan brought down the gavel—with some help—to adjourn the session.

The gavel's head snapped off.

Laughter rippled across the session parlor hall.

"I've told you to be careful with the gavel," opposition leader Sen. Edgardo Angara quipped. "That is a very source of danger to some. Look what you've done."

Arroyo was apparently provoked by earlier remarks from evangelist Eddie Villanueva's lawyer, Sulpicio Potenciano, who urged senators to refrain from the "personal" issues of this controversial impasse and to look into the election-rigging charges.

Go down to the EDs

"We want this [situation to be credible]. If we didn't want them to be credible, we would have walked out earlier," Pancho said.

The tandem embargo was greeted by opposition opposition senators as an administration-controlled canvassing committee moved to lock into EDs because of the opposition charged were clear cases of "dagdag-bawas" (padding and shaving of votes) by administration-backed candidates to ensure that President Macapagal-Arroyo was proclaimed next president.

The opening of the EDs had been an opposition demand almost from Day One.

But after a week of contentious recess, the ballot boxes containing the crucial EDs have remained so tightly sealed as a bank vault.

Opposition Rep. Rodolfo Plaza (Agusan del Sur) delivered point of the afternoon attack against the canvassing procedures, when he also showed the pro-Macapagal bloc to those opposition calls for a removal of precinct-by-cast apart.

'Like a circus'

"Never, not once, was the request of the minority to go down to the election returns granted," he said. "Well the minority put on the air and walked ... We are doing a caucus here but what we are doing looks like a circus."

Plaza insisted, "We don't want a situation where either FPJ or Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be declared as a bogus president, a fake president."

"The issue now is a legal question, not legal, Mr. Chairman," Plaza pleaded.

Pancho insisted on the same line, saying the canvassing committee should not be "a kangaroo court."

PHOTO left to right: Hoang Tu Giang (Vietnam), won 3rd place and Jakadu Tuyorio (PDI correspondent), won second place in the Role of Private Sector in Development category. Tran Thi Le Thuy (Vietnam), won 1st place, and Ling Bo (China) won 3rd place in the Regional Cooperation and Integration Development category.

PDI correspondent wins Asia journalism award in Japan

Vietnam's Bank," which came out in the issue's Asian Development Outlook last year.

She was among the 20 finalists from Asia and the Pacific, who were chosen from a field of 99 journalists and more than 200 entries.

Sponsored by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), the research arm of the ADB, the Dept. aims to acknowledge print journalists in developing countries in Asia who provide high-quality, balanced coverage of real issues affecting growth and development, according to ADBI dean Peter McCawley.

6 categories

It focuses on excellence in journalistic reporting in six categories—pro-poor sustainable growth, inclusive social development, good governance and anticorruption, role of the private sector, regional cooperation and integration for development, and environmental sustainability.

The awards were based on the journalists' published works from 2001 to 2003.

Entries placed second to Nepal's Gajendra Budhathoki in his category. Vietnam's Hoang Tu Giang won third.

The other winners were China's Ma Guihua (pro-poor sustainable economic growth), India's Lalita Iyadhai (inclusive social development), Pakistan's Masood Anwar (good governance and anticorruption), Vietnam's Tran Thi Le Thuy (regional cooperation and integration for development) and China's Wang Yu (environmental sustainability).

Two Filipino journalists were chosen second runner-up in their categories. They were Miriam Grace Go of Newsbreak (role of private sector in development) and Yasmin Arquiza of Inquirer (environmental sustainability).

The winners were chosen by a jury that included Anthony Rowley, Tokyo correspondent of the business Times of Singapore and field editor for Oxford Analytica; Yoshio Shimoda, adviser on international affairs to the Asahi Shimbun; and Satoshi(sic) Kakuchi, a Hong Kong-based journalist reporting for Inter Press Service.

Cash prizes were given to the winners in all categories.

AFP to start bidding for 47,000 combat boots

From page A1

Manufacturing...awarded the...pre-bid conference). On June 22, they will handle...ance papers of the bidding...eligibility, technical, financial testing of samples.

Cheong said the earliest bidding routinely targeted is 100 percent award to the winning bidder. But it was later learned that Filboot could only deliver 32 percent of the supply within the timeframe set by the military and the PSOBM.

"And they amended the contract to us, the army soldiers would have received all 97,227 [pairs of] boots by this time," Cheong said.

He said that before the PSOBM could be questioned for the partial award, it decided to bid out the remaining 68 percent of the contract.

Protecting its interest

Cheong said Joshar was taking part in the new bidding to protect its "business interest."

"Although we are disheartened by the anomalies surrounding the earlier bidding, we still and be engaged from accomplishing what is rightfully ours," he said.

He lamented that the "grand" business climate in the country was being eroded by the alleged corruption in the government.

"We have no other choice but to go back [and look for new business opportunities] since we have the manufacturing and financial capability to supply the army's needs," he said.

Cheong said he was hoping that this time, Ojeda and the other officials of the PSOBM, including its director, Brigadier General [illegible], would be fair and uphold the rule of law.

But he quickly added that Joshar would pursue its complaint.

Earlier, Cheong reminded that the contract was awarded to Filboot, the highest bidder, despite Joshar's having submitted the lowest bid. He claimed collusion between the PSOBM and the AFP Research and Development Center, which, he said, made it appear that Joshar's product samples had "major and minor defects."

He also said not one Joshar representative was invited to witness the sample testing through a written notice, as mandated by law.

"And why would we submit inferior samples? It's ridiculous," Cheong said.

Frustrated

According to Cheong, Joshar supplied wool, plaid belts, blankets and boots to the military in the past, but decided to stop dealing with it in 1994 "out of frustration over the corruption that characterizes most contracts bid out by the AFP."

He said it was only last year that Joshar resumed business with the military, in the belief that "the AFP has changed, and the Macapagal administration is serious in working out the last eyes in the military establishment."

Cheong cited the case of lawyer Norman Dacoycoy, assistant chief of the JAG Office of Legal Affairs, who had delivered

PNP denies existence of cartel

By TJ Burgonio

MANILA — The cartel accusing deals for military supplies are operating in the Philippine National Police, according to Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, its spokesperson.

Goltiao said that testimony by supplier Eduardo Pelaez's claim on Tuesday the PNP Bids and Awards Committee was abiding by a strict set of rules that would deter the operations of any cartel.

"The committee determines the winning bidder based on the quality of the materials supplied and the price. It follows certain rules before it issues the directive to the Directorate of Logistics [to order supplies]," Goltiao said.

He said the committee led by Deputy Director General Heras Gil had yet to receive a complaint from any supplier about the existence of a cartel.

"It appears that the PNP is being dragged into this because of the old issue against the former PNP chief, General [Hermilio] Lacson. That's an old issue," Goltiao said, referring to Pelaez's botched handcuffs contract.

Pelaez had said that a cartel of companies was engaged in procuring equipment for the PNP, and that most of those firms were also part of the controversial Lacson deal.

The businesswoman was arrested for the contract to supply handcuffs to the PNP in 1999, despite being the fifth lowest bidder. But she was never able to deliver 41,250 handcuffs worth P15 million because of a delay in the payment.

She attributed the delay to her not being a favored supplier. She later sued certain PNP officials.

Goltiao said it was impossible for a conspiracy or a cartel to corner the bulk of deals in the PNP because this would also involve members of the Bids and Awards committee.

"What will be the use of the commission of every deal is being screened by a single company?" he said.

But he issued a clarification the next day, saying that while he had confirmed the existence of the complaint, his opinion was not the DILG's official stand.

AFP chief did not ask!

Cheong furnished the Inquirer a copy of his letter to AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya commanding Joshar's earlier request for an inquiry into the alleged irregular bidding for military supplies, such as pancho boots.

"The final [anti-] bidding an audience with him, precisely to allow all parties concerned to sit down and thresh out the issues, but he did not do anything," Cheong said.

He said this inaction was prejudicial to the soldiers' best interests.

"General Abaya must not duck [from] under investigation. But maybe [he] is not aware that there was a letter issued by Undersecretary Banaga directing the Office of Legal Affairs to conduct the investigation," Cheong said.

In a letter to the Inquirer, Ojeda said the award of the contract to Filboot was absorbed because while Joshar had put in the lowest bid, its sample boots had failed the testing.

Ojeda also said the post-qualification...or testing the samples after the bid documents had been opened—was justified under Republic Act No. 9184, or the New Procurement Law.

To which Cheong said: "Sir, it's unfair, because in the law did it say that they can open the chief envelope [containing the bid price] before the testing."

Reforming political . . .

From page A1

papal Arroyo's term ends on June 30.

Dalisay said the official team, legislators are squabbling over duties by the state opposition candidate, Fernando Poe Jr., that decision officials helped steal the election for Ms Macapagal...the personnel armory according to exit polls—by tampering with previously fixed vote tallies.

Sustained economic growth of at least 7 percent annually over the next seven years would be needed to cut in half the poverty level from 34 percent of Filipino families to 17 percent. The economy, however, is likely to expand by only 5.0-6.0 percent this year, according to him.

Foreign direct investment

The government needs to attract foreign direct investment, he added.

"We must increase the investment rate from 19 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) to 28 percent in two years," and to create more character exports receipts to $50 billion from $38 billion last year, he said.

Therefore, the country's attention for private sector investment is being eroded by the huge public-sector deficit that leaves the government little room to improve infrastructure.

The Philippines' capital outlay of 3.5 percent of GDP between 1998 and 2002 was Asia's lowest...Not good.

The national budget deficit stood at 4.6 percent of GDP last year.

The government arrest in basic capital spending by at least P100 billion ($1.8 billion) every year for the next two years, Neri said.

Constraints

He said investment constraints were described in in the Constitution, which bars foreign equity control in key sectors of economic activity, as well as in the powers of the independent judiciary to interfere in areas of economic policy.

Neri backed Ms Macapagal's pledge to work for a shift to a parliamentary system of government. "We have to end this policy gridlock," he added.

To make a parliamentary system succeed, however, the government should take steps to "mitigate money politics" by introducing public financing for election campaigns.

Right now, politicians 'rent in election ti-
tenures" vs bankroll their candidacies. "If they win they have to pay it back one way or another" through the granting of favors by pass or through "policies" that are friendly to the line of business of the political donors.

"It's hard to have good politics as long as the root cause is political financing," Neri said. "We have to break out of this vicious cycle."

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INQUIRER

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Key witnesses in tax scam . . .

From page A1

implicated in the scam, also agreed to provide details of the tax scam and testify on documents pertaining to the alleged conspiracy to defraud the government of P5.3 billion in revenues from tax credit certificates (TCCs).

Major breakthrough

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio told reporters that the cooperation of the Chingkoes was a major breakthrough which will finally result in the possible resolution of the tax credit cases.

Villa-Ignacio said he expected to resolve the cases in about a year and half, if defense lawyers would not engage in legal maneuvers to delay their resolution.

"Our strategy is to have two or three conviction involving major players in the tax credit scam," Villa-Ignacio said.

Imprisonment

He said those found guilty could get 43-year imprisonment, but ruled out the possibility of obtaining the same verdict.

Pelin said reporters that he finally decided to give his full cooperation to the resolution of the case because he had full trust and confidence in the sincerity of Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and Villa-Ignacio to finally bring closure to the cases.

Asked why he and his wife withheld their full cooperation with the government in the past, Pelin replied: "We don't know what's the play." He also said that billions of money obtained from the scam could have worked to delay the resolution of the case.

Must-win case

Villa-Ignacio said the decision to grant the Chingkoes immunity was arrived at after a series of meetings between Marcelo, Villa-Ignacio, Assistant Ombudsman Emilio del Castillo, Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Orlando Casimiro and Cecilio and Bartolomeo Cenon (OSG), and Task Force 158, an inter-agency committee created by Malacañang to investigate and file cases against syndicates involved in the mis of the Fraudulent TCCs.

Marcelo has classified the tax credit issue as one of the "must-win" cases.

The Chingkoe group of companies, chaired by Faustino, was one of the companies found to have used the TCCs to cheat the government.

In the case of the 11 Chingkoe companies, Faustino Chingkoe was found to have conspired with government officials to secure TCCs even if they are "not qualified or legally entitled to avail of tax credit."

Graft charges were filed against Faustino, Pelin and Bonifacio Tiu and ex-lawyers P. Bellosillo, former undersecretary and executive director of the Department of Finance, Efraim Avelinan, among others, before the Sandiganbayan six years ago.

Pelin was former president of the Chingkoe Group of companies but was executed by Faustino in 1995.

The Chingkoe couple will testify on the alleged irregularities involving P2.5 billion worth of TCCs issued for the textile business of the Chingkoes.

Laundered assets

Pelin said his testimony would concentrate on breaking the "corporate layers of concealment" put up by Felix after the alleged tax evasion was uncovered when seven postdated tax...

He said the assets have been laundered to banks. He had them washed through the banks. At the right time, I will name the five banks that were used for the washing of funds," he said, referring to brother Faustino.

According to him, he has documents and photos of the new complex put up by Faustino here and abroad. He also disclosed that Faustino has built five houses in Canada using the money from the scam.

The bigger, Faustino said that as key witness, the Chingkoe couple would provide the "missing link" in the case. He said they have unanswered documents but no one has time because he is ready as to their veracity.

Without the Chingkoe couple, he said prosecutors would have been left facing a "blank wall." "We have these documents [but no one would testify to," he said.

18 other witnesses

Villa-Ignacio said the prosecutor had about 20 more witnesses to testify on the scams.

He said the agencies concerned have also moved to resolve irritants among them. "The issue are not supporting the cases or move forward," Villa-Ignacio added.

Key government offices involved in resolving the scam have been locked in bitter fights and wrangling in the past that Ombudsman himself was at one time accused of "freezing out" witnesses.

'Backers' secretly blocking RP bid in OIC

By Jeronne Ebdane

MUSLIM countries that have openly supported the Philippines' bid for an observer seat in the Organization of Islamic Conference may actually be the ones currently blocking it, according to a Department of Foreign Affairs official.

The diplomat, who declined to be identified, named two key members of the OIC which he said were sympathetic to the rebel Moro National Liberation Front, and were secretly blocking the Philippine application.

The source resisted to "double pattern" in previous OIC sessions where the Philippine delegation, assured that the application would be included in the agenda, were beaten empty-handed.

He stressed that MNLF leaders still maintain a strong influence with government leaders of the two Muslim countries as well as others that are supporting Philippine Muslims in their campaign for self-determination.

After decades of friendship, the MNLF leaders and the leaders of these Muslim countries remain very close and are committed to one another's causes. The MNLF is considered a part of the greater family of Muslim nations," the official said.

Some of these countries have interests of their own in denying an observer seat to the Philippines, the official added.

The Philippine government has been trying to take care from the MNLF the right to represent Philippine Muslim communities in the OIC after the normalization talks group and the government signed Tripoli agreement in 1996.

DFA Secretary Delia Albert is now in Istanbul, Turkey where foreign ministers from the 57 OIC member countries are holding a three-day meeting.

The meeting began last Thursday but so far Albert's delegation has not yet received word on whether the Philippine application for observer status would even be on the agenda.

Wire reports said the election of the OIC Secretary General and the Cyprus problem would be the main issues of the meeting.

Albert has argued that the Philippine government would be in a better position to represent Filipino Muslims in the OIC as "it should not just be the government group representation that should be represented but the country as a whole."

She said that being an observer in the OIC would give the Philippines the opportunity to share with the body what it has done to integrate the country's Muslim population in the mainstream and to address the concerns identified by the MNLF.

Russia and India are also applying for observer status before the year-Islamic unity.

Observer seats, which are granted by consensus, were recently conferred on Bosnia Herzegovina, the Central African Republic and Thailand.

DFA Undersecretary Jose Brillantes however said reporters yesterday that "the prospects look good" for the Philippines succeeding this year.

"We have a number of commitments. One agreement is not enough," he said in an interview.

Brillantes added that Albert has had bilateral meetings with other OIC foreign ministers attending the summit and has been assured of support for the Philippine application.

Last year, the Philippines failed to get observer status during the OIC leaders' summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, despite the presence of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

REMINDER

Tomorrow, Friday, June 18, will be the Annual Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To celebrate the occasion, Special masses will be held at the Sanctuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park and at the Carmelite Convent, Jesena Rodriguez Ave. (Broadway), and in other churches.

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Caltex, too, raises cooking gas price

BECOMING in international price pressures, Caltex Phil. yesterday announced it was increasing the price of its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) products by P1.70 per kilogram.

Effective at 6 p.m. yesterday, dealers of Caltex LPG started charging P1,670 more for every 11 kg cylinder of cooking gas.

From an average retail price of P908 per cylinder, Caltex LPG now sells for P980 to P985 per cylinder.

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. was the first of the big three oil companies to hike LPG prices, its increase taking effect at 12:01 a.m. yesterday.

This is the seventh increase in LPG prices for the year and the biggest that has been implemented so far.

Since the start of the year, prices of LPG have gone up by a total of P4.05 per kilogram.

In an earlier interview, Shell general manager for external affairs Roberto Ebreo said the increase national oriented price for LPG had soared to $350/metric ton this month, an increase of $20 per MT from $330 per MT in May.

The May contract price, although lower than that of June, already translated to an increase of P1.05 per kg price increase in last month—the first one in May 31 and another on May 20.

In April, the LPG contract price averaged $290 per MT. There were also two increases that month, totaling P1.30 per kg.

Other LPG suppliers Petron Corp. and Total (Phil.) Corp. have yet to announce their own price adjustments. —Miguel L. Ibo

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Guico

US poll: Most Iraqis want Americans out

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush is fond of telling Americans they have liberated Iraq and that its future generations will be thankful. The current generation of Iraqis, however, overwhelmingly views US forces as occupiers and wishes they would just leave, according to a poll commissioned by the administration.

The poll, requested by the Coalition Provisional Authority last month but not released to the American public, found more than half of Iraqis surveyed believed both that they'd be safer without US forces and that all Americans believe like the militant cleric Moqtada Sadr: that the US troops should leave.

The survey obtained by The Associated Press, also found radical cleric Moqtada Sadr to enjoy a big jump in popularity so he looks as many Sunnis as Shiites. Sadr launched two uprisings against US-led forces, but would still be a distant finalist in an election for Iraqi president.

"If you are dying here as part of the coalition, it (the poll) is pretty grim," said Ronald Hatchett, a career foreign service officer who is working for Ambassador-designate John Negroponte's interim government and helps oversee the CPA's polling of Iraqis.

While you have to be cautious about the conclusions you've been misunderstood by a lot of Iraqis, the truth of the matter is they have a strong inclination on record who change what have the potential to bring democracy here," he said in a telephone interview Tuesday from Baghdad.

Hamilton noted the poll found 63 percent of Iraqis believed conditions will improve when an Iraqi interim government takes over June 30. And 62 percent believed it was "very likely" the Iraqi police and Army will maintain security without US forces.

State department spokesperson Richard Boucher said: "Let's face it. That's the goal, to build those up so the point where they can take charge in Iraq and they can maintain security in Iraq."

The poll was conducted by Iraqis in face-to-face interviews in the cities with people representative of the country's various hotspots. Its results conflict with the generally upbeat assessments the administration continues to give Americans. Just last week, Bush predicted future generations of Iraqis "will come to America and say, thank goodness America stood the line and was strong and did not falter in the face of the violence of crime."

The current generation seems angry for Americans to leave, the poll found.

The resistance's confidence rating is May stood at 11 percent, down from 57 percent in November, while resistance forces had just 16 percent support. Ninety-two percent of the Iraqis said they considered coalition troops occupiers, while just 2 percent called them liberators.

Nearly half of Iraqis said they felt unsafe in their neighborhoods. And 16 percent of Iraqis reported they'd had cable if US troops immediately left, nearly double the 20 percent who felt that way in January. Ninety-seven percent said Americans should leave immediately, and 45 percent said they preferred for US forces to leave as soon as a permanent Iraqi government is installed.

Frustration over security was made worse this spring by revelations of sexual and physical abuse of Iraqis by US guards at the Abu Ghraib prison. AP

US wants security for Saddam transfer

SADDAM

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush said on Tuesday he will not hand over former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to the interim Iraqi government until it has secure facilities in place to ensure he does not escape trial.

In an interminable stop, officials said the Bush administration was prepared to transfer "legal custody" of Saddam to the new government. But the US military would continue to hold him physically until Washington is satisfied a secure Iraqi facility is ready to keep security forces out easily.

The administration would not commit to handing over Saddam and other prisoners by the June 30 transfer of power, as specified by interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

The White House said a UN Security Council resolution passed last week gave US forces the authority to hold prisoners deemed to be security threats after June 30.

State department spokesperson Richard Boucher said responsibility for allied prisoners of war is to be detained "as long as the hostilities continue... (and) it is quite clear at this point that hostilities continue."

President George W. Bush said the United States would not allow "last minute" to jeopardize plans for Saddam to be tried by a special tribunal—comments that underscored the administration's lack of confidence in Iraqi security forces.

"The President is a realist. He is a realist. He wants to be brought to trial," Bush said in a four-Garden news conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"We want to make sure that he (Saddam) doesn't come back to power. And so therefore, it's legitimate question to ask of the interim government: 'How are you going to make sure he stays in jail?' And that's the question I'm asking. And others are, get the right answer, which I'm confident we will—we'll work with them as do so...then we'll all be satisfied," Bush said.

Allawi said on Monday Saddam and other prisoners would be given to the new Iraqi government within two weeks to prepare for trial but in a potential rift, Bush and his spokesperson, Scott McClellan, were non-committal about the timing.

"We're going to turn him over to the appropriate time... We're talking to them about those issues, and about the process for turning them over," McClellan said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said prisoners of war and all other detainees in Iraq are entitled to a speedy legal process after the June 30 handover. Reuters

Firefighters work at the scene following an attack on an oil pipeline in Basra. Iraq's oil exports were severely cut after the attacks completely shut down oil exports from Iraq's two main terminals. —

Pipeline attacks halt Iraq oil exports

BAGHDAD—Saboteurs attacked two key southern oil pipelines for a second day Wednesday, cutting off all crude oil exports from the Gulf, officials said.

The latest attack in Basra occurred just after midnight, said Samir Jassim, a senior official of the state-run Southern Oil Co. He said it would take at least a week to repair the city's two pipelines before exports will resume. Iraq could be resumed.

"Due to the damage inflicted on the two pipelines, the pumping of oil to the Basra oil terminal has completely stopped," Jassim said. "Exports have come to halt" through the southern export route.

Two other explosions occurred Tuesday along pipelines at the Faw peninsula, near Basra. Iraqi officials blamed those attacks on Saddam Hussein loyalists and al-Qaeda. AP

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Al-Qaida escalates battle in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH—Al-Qaida gunmen showed images of a blindfolded American hostage and said they would kill him if the Saudi government failed to free jailed militants within 72 hours.

"My name is Paul Marshal Johnson and I am a citizen of the United States," a clothed voice with an American accent said in a recording on an Islamist website on Tuesday. "I work for Apache helicopters."

The threat to kill Johnson, which follows a spate of suicide bombings and shootings in the past six weeks, raised the stakes in al-Qaida's war to topple the kingdom's pro-US monarchy and drive out Western men from the world's largest oil exporter.

"If the 72 hours in the Saudi government want to answer the release of the American hostage, then must release our mujahideen held hostage in its jails. They have 72 hours from today or else we will sacrifice him," said an al-Qaida statement carried on Sawt al-Jihad website.

The statement, dated Tuesday, was signed by the Qaida Organization in the Arabian Peninsula. Sawt al-Jihad has carried similar messages in the past.

On Saturday, al-Qaida said it was holding Johnson, a US engineer and the first Westerner to be kidnapped in a wave of militant attacks in the kingdom that began more than a year ago.

It also claimed responsibility for killing American Kenneth Scroggs, who was shot dead as he golfed his car in Jeddah.

Saudi government foreign affairs adviser Adel al-Jubeir told CNN that his government was looking into the situation and consulting the United States on what actions to take.

"And then we will make decisions on what the next steps are but our history has been one of not negotiating with terrorists," he said.

Dr Saeb Saudi minister Crown Prince Abdullah said on Wednesday the kingdom would strike against al-Qaida soon.

"We have forces and until now they have not appeared but you will see them in the coming days," he said in remarks on Saudi media. "We are only be patient for so long and from now on you will see things that will reassure you." Reuters

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SOUNTek

British scientists to clone human embryos

LONDON—Britain's reproductive science regulator said Wednesday it was considering the country's first request to clone human embryos for scientific research.

A team at Newcastle University said they had asked the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority for a license to create embryos from which stem cells would be harvested for medical research. The researchers hope eventually to create insulin-producing cells that can be transplanted into diabetic patients.

The authority said in a statement that it was meeting Wednesday to consider the request, but that there would be no immediate announcement of a decision.

Britain legalized therapeutic cloning in 2001, becoming the first country in the world to do so. Scientists wishing to perform therapeutic cloning in Britain also need a license from the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority, which has not yet granted any for the procedure.

If permission is granted, scientists may create cloned embryos only for purposes of extracting stem cells for medical research. The extraction, which is done when the embryo is a few days old, means the donors cannot develop into babies. The embryos are only allowed to be developed until they are 14 days old.

The Newcastle scientists hope to clone embryos by implanting nuclei from the skin tissue of donors in donated eggs. Immature versions containing stem cells—which have the potential to reproduce every type of cell in the human body—from the cloned embryo so that they would be a perfect transplant match for the donor. AP

20 killed in India as train derails

BOMBAY—At least 20 people were killed and about 100 injured Wednesday when a passenger train derailed in western India after hitting a boulder on the tracks, railways minister Lalu Prasad Yadav said.

The accident occurred on a bridge between Vasi and Karanjadi stations about 200 km from the commercial hub Bombay in western Maharashtra state, police said.

Television footage showed mangled coaches of the Shatapgandha Express lying on their sides while two carriages were seen hanging precariously from the bridge. The locomotive was lying toppled on its side on the river bed.

Locals were seen trying to rescue passengers still trapped in the twisted wreckage.

"According to my information, 20 people were killed and 100 were injured in the accident," Yadav told a press conference in the eastern metropolis of Calcutta.

"Landslides on the railway tracks, triggered by heavy rains, might have caused the accident. I am going to the spot to personally supervise rescue and relief work," he announced.

The Hindi Zee television news channel quoted the driver of the train as saying that he had spotted a boulder on the tracks and had applied emergency brakes.

But as the train was travelling at about 90 to 95 km per hour, the collision was unavoidable.

A doctor from a hospital near the accident site told Zee news that 60 of the injured were being treated in his facility. Fifteen of the injured were in a critical condition, he said.

The train was traveling between the southern port city of Cochin in Kerala state and Bombay when the accident occurred early this morning, said railways spokesperson Vinchel Pariego.

She said most train's bathroom directed from the worst-while some had been cancelled.

A special relief train, she added, was being sent from the western coastal city of Mangalore in Karnataka state to transport relatives of the injured to Bombay. Most of the passengers had boarded the train from Mangalore.

Ordering a probe into the accident, minister Yadav said he wanted to make sure adequate safety precautions had been taken and that the accident had been unavoidable.

"If anyone is found guilty he will be punished," Yadav said, announcing an ex-gratia payment of $2,200 to the next of kin of those killed. AFP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Speedy

BECAUSE it cannot kill all the lawyers, as Shakespeare so sagely advised, the public can only grit its teeth as the continuing saga of the canvass of the returns for president and vice president. A recent bagatelon is the adjournment of Congress, which has brought about another round of debates on whether the joint committee is empowered to proceed with the canvass in such a case.

EDITORIALS

It would be a non-issue in a less contentious setting, but things being the way they are, with the atmosphere getting more impassioned by the day and practically each thrust and parry of the contending camps giving rise to legalistic arguments that in turn serve to fervor the proceedings, we submit that the wise step would be for President Macapagal-Arroyo to call Congress in a special session.

But this is just one of the issues bedevilling the canvass. The canvass still being conducted by the joint committee more than a month after the elections. Lawyers of the opposition have stepped up their demand for the examination of election returns, claiming that vote-padding and -shaving effectively changed out the true will of the electorate particularly in such provinces as Leyte, Cebu and Agusan del Norte. (And even Pangasinan, as Sen. Loren Legarda declared.) But they continue to be frustrated by the administration-controlled committee, the name of the game being numbers (in more ways than one).

Yes, numbers. Make no mistake about it: Despite the injured tone that it has been employing, the majority is running this show, down to the constancy of "noting," promptly deadpan, the minority's complaints of fraud. The canvass will proceed, period. This is the way the cards will be dealt. Procedure, as legally defined, is all, and the minority is scrapped by it.

In the demand of the opposition that election returns of questionable certificates of canvass—only these, not all—be examined, Sen. Joker Arroyo has more than once expressed firm opposition. "We're here to canvass. We're not judges... We're not clothed with authority to pass judgment on these documents," he intoned on Tuesday.

But, the attentive observer would ask, are not these lawmakers sitting as the National Board of Canvassers precisely empowered to determine the authenticity and due execution of the COCs?

As Senior Associate Justice Reynato Puno succinctly put it in an opinion separate from the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling that the canvass of votes by a committee of Congress is constitutional, lawmakers should not behave as "unthinking clay machines when conducting the canvass."

"The nation can endure a slow but trustworthy tally. It may not survive an indefensible count, however speedy it may be," Puno said in the opinion concurred in by three other justices. He also urged lawmakers to compare themselves "more as representatives of the people and less as partisans of political parties."

Speedy versus trustworthy?

The way it's going, with the majority determined to get the deed done within the deadline of June 30 despite the escalating cries of fraud as well as documentation thereof, the winner will be proclaimed—and seated with a tattered cloak of credibility. (For those casting about for senators, the broken gavel at Wednesday's proceedings does not bid fair for everyone.)

Absurd

THE MAJORITY has constantly harped on the canvass proceedings as not being the proper forum for the complaints of fraud. Senator-elect Miriam Defensor Santiago also earlier dwelled on the point, and, in that inimitable budding manner of hers, advised Fernando Poe Jr. to take his protest to the Presidential Electoral Tribunal. (It's an ordeal with which she is familiar, her defeat in the 1992 presidential election, as easily snatched from the jaws of victory being yet fresh in the public memory.)

The advice is, of course, in this time and place, absurd. It's the legal way to proceed, but absurd. (Think of that one-day wonder, Pauly Rey, Noel Cabiles, whose 2001 protest the House Electoral Tribunal finally ruled on favorably.) But then Santiago appears to be pushing things to their absurd conclusion. (Is perhaps they should be.) Observe the woman. Starting taken on various shades of nonentitlement, having plumbed the depths of professional humiliation and personal grief, having known all that, what else now seems to be to amazed.

Invitation to compounding disasters

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

(With ardent Filipinoness, Congress' canvass of votes remains strapped to 1935-century rattletrap paced bureaucrat-tables. But 21st-century issues are emerging in a country struggling with unresolved 20th-century problems).

"Our" economy from population and health to water are compounding as legislators bicker (Senate version) over who's a child (House).

"In the 21st century, the major issue is no longer rapid population growth," an international panel of demographers in Paris declared. "It's age-structural maturation."

Not in the Philippines. Its fast-emerging age groups. The "boom generation" is larger than those preceding it. Their numbers are ripping the balance between dependent and working age populations. The skills curtailed create pressures on governments and workers, as trends for countries and workplaces change.

"So the Philippines, changes caused by this 'boom generation' are already making their way up the age pyramid, altering the population at each life-cycle stage," noted sardine Senate-Solonian of late Lutgardo Barbo, secretary Office of Population Studies asserts. "They cannot be stopped."

Two symptoms are somewhat problems of a "demographic transition" than believed.

The Philippines reduced death rates, but fertility remains high. Its population, combined, leaps, japan complements into "demographic transition" so low-density and low births. Thus, Philippine population surged to over 80 million while Thailand maintained growth to 62 million.

Thailand's future demise and misery are rising in "advanced nations"—and among the elites of impoverished nations. They can account for 8% percent of Guinness's elders.

This "epidemiological transition... is not a uniform phenomenon," says Jeffrey Sachs of "problem," a Harvard University easily down. It is overlooking and solution demands innovative policies and political will.

Japan is solve problems, can offset this reform. "is disappearing the less developed nations," the Asian Development Bank notes. "Advanced countries had the option of sequential solutions."

Three enormous unknowns that presaging action, while we focus and hold elections, refuse to budging. Development is a No Fucking-ness.

Duker positions automobile lane congestion, pollution, urban deterioration, marine resource depletion and pollution is corruption and undoubtedly schools.

In 1960, the Philippines was No. 2 to Japan, economist Peter Wallace notes. (GDP 25-years) Now it's nearly ahead of Thailand. Three then, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and three China was scrapped on.

"It was primary cause of growth of the population (2.36 percent) and the economy (3 percent), is still take 50 years to catch up where Thailand is today," Wallace notes. The most economy to save poor as outside the Vietnam. Three Bangladesh!

NDB president Tadao Chino underscored this child was primary focal policy speech to ADB operation conference in Shanghai. "Asia has a lesson for the world."

But the Philippines promises to prosper once study.

But shedding into the poor house is not inevitable. Appropriate policies can show, then reverse the plunge into burden-cum-crisis. But we will not be the brainwashed must be there—and the gen for the painful climb up.

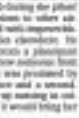
Can we hack it? The tabulips of parents over the education department's provision for industrial classes in Science, Math and English proficiency remains.

Economic reforms to reduce poverty and establish stability are urgent. Institutions and governance need to be radically improved. And a new president must enforce the rule of law, curb corruption and hold public officials accountable. Third is to empower people to have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Today means disaster. Their tardiness, acts of pedigree," Wharton says. To date, danger lurks.

E-mail: juan_mercado@pdi.net.ph

Reversal of fortune



THERE'S THE RUB

Gerónimo de Ghetto

It's the true revenge of the nerds. Losers of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your, well, nothing.

* * *

One said she had a brother who used to be a PBA gifted boy who lost his job during the gilded decade of 2000. His applications to other athletes have no fruit, and hand-outs impoverish, he turned his energies elsewhere. He started earning and has grown a phenomenal enterprise. Along the way, he married and found a fairly well-off family who was promised by her father a bigger allowance and a second hand car if she would take up nursing in college. Her father was certain it would bring her a bright future.

Welcome to the brave new world. Until recently the nine in the 1900s when rich Filipino families were distinguished by having maids, or Chinese cooks. Now rich Hong Kong families are distinguished by having "Filipinas," which has become synonymous with maids. She, the fondest fantasies doesn't use that, contrary to notice. But that is another story.) I was about to say the day may not be far off when instead of sponsoring scholars in Asia, we are importing them. But I remembered we had PA law pros, and we're hard hit for years now.

* * *

Years ago, when one was Filipinos left the Untold Riches, we had huge dream that often granted with coveted beef and other natural goods. We had as well VHS players and various videogear and software that we bought in the United States but could not buy with our meager dollars.

Now it's the Bubblenians who flip or buy second-hand and other assisted goods from boundary-free sources. Pulse, a New Zealand product, is a much preferred brand. And of course rather than hauling home with gifts of whim, they shop to Wilt Mall or Quiapo to buy DVDs, memory of China's and Malaysia's advertisers in free enterprise. Though I wonder, many multibillionaires have become more wary of what's hard to the pirated video to laments of an slow of them were held in immigration and had to be staff confiscated.

Well, we can still buy books in the United States. I heard in New York is a fortune and Langsia Summer is a bargain. I'm not sure. There is jeans, I see solely practice there is little chance of a reversal of fortune.

* * *

I know the critics panned "The Day After Tomorrow" for seeming everything but it has its moments. The one I found only inspired was the part where Americans troop down south to escape an ice age. And where do they go? To Mexico of course, the one country Bubbles fear or loves to use, for supplying illegal immigrants to the United States. In our sorrow in the movie, a monstrous waffle just has ensued and American citizens are sending home deep in the Rio Grande to get to Mexico. Which is perfectly fine, since through backgrounders that Mexico has closed its borders and will no longer allow further customs into its territory. (Don't know if that cannot get powerful boat gallons and wild applause in television screens. Maybe I will forgive this movie.)

* * *

So I ran to this, the Lakers has just lost Game 6 of the NBA Finals. Only a week ago, American basketball was in a state of crisis. Now, it's the Pistons' turn. (Or Detroit could beat a "Schwartz" like LA. Yet after four games, LA has yet to play a good game against Detroit. If Detroit is Fact Sad) who Game 7, as is should have, the entire arena's on fire now.

I don't know what will happen from here. I'll be stoned what the rest of the series plays, in Europe where they don't give a damn about basketball. What I know is that LeBron's can only bounce and will be for one more game.

Now that will be one hell of a reversal of fortune.

Most critical phase approaches

THE OPENING[illegible] of votes in Congress moves to most critical phase in the next two weeks. For every day this week in the certification of votes are being tabulated amid fiery debates, the opposition has indicated more plans to challenge the outcome. There is but, Arthur Pinpin's plan to question before the Supreme Court the authority of the vote-counting mechanism in view of the recent adjournment of the 12th Congress, which he says declares void the "legally dead." Speaker Jose de Venecia's explanations—that while Congress has terminated its regular session, it remains to have legislative functions while canvassing the C.O. votes, which is mandated by the Constitution to Congress, notwithstanding—seems to fall on deaf opposition ears.

The opposition's position is difficult to understand, considering that they were same antagonistic vote in place during the 2001 and 1998 elections and no questions were ever raised on this point.

* * *

Sen. Edgardo Angara has also hinted that the opposition might walk out as a "last resource" after the majority has resisted its efforts to allow the opening of election returns. Sen. Joker Arroyo has reiterated that Congress has no power and must suspend its sessions about the election returns should be rightly directed to the Presidential Electoral Tribunal. Joint committee co-chairs Raul Gonzalez has openly declared that the committee will not be bullied. That's supposed to take a few days, and if the legal issues on the rules are any indication, this one will generate more friction. The senators voting on the recipes by the two chambers, which are controlled by the majority party, will only be as non-issues. The question is, can the rules be a deadline to rest?

* * *

Last June 30, the German government,

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

through Ambassador Herbert Jess, conferred the highest award, the German Federal Service Cross, First Class, on Dr. Pedro Tuvo, S.J., founder of its foundation, which helps prevent poor Filipino students from becoming dropouts. The awarding was held at the ambassador's residence, attended by 70[illegible] representatives and Filipino and foreign diplomats. Jess explained in his enthusiasm that except for former President Cory Aquino, who received the award for her books of understanding for Germany, no other Filipino has been similarly honored. Tuvo is a naturalized Filipino. The amiable ambassador explained to the audience that Tuvo's native France has conferred the Legion of Honor on him, and that he received the Allied Education Award in Belgium. "Germany has been absent from the long list of awards, but now we are making it up to him," said Jess, rounding it in public from French ambassador Serge Keyser.

Turning to history, Jess said the award was timely in view of the recent celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing in Normandy, France, to free the world from World War II, which drove Winston Churchill to first befriend Schroeder in the environment. It was the first time a German head of state joined Israel, from the Allied countries. Interrupting Jess said, 90-year-old Tuvo was born just before World War I, in Alsace-Lorraine, a region between the borders of France and Germany which has been ruled alternately by these two powers. His mother died during childbirth, reared by them and subsequently utilized in the service of two countries in fists. Fed China and then the Philippines.

* * *

In his response, Tuvo revealed with comity how he came to Manila quite by accident, after fleeing communist rule in China. As an educator, he quickly saw the alarming school dropout problem here. Beginning with 60 students, he set up Nazareth in 1974. As of this day, it has helped over 150,000 students remain in or return to school.

In the early 1980s Tuvo set up a sister organization, the Tuvo Technical-Vocational High School, which gives students from the very poor families in Metro Manila free five-year high school education and technical training in arts of science skills, e.g., automotive, computer, farming, carpentry and electrical. These skills enable the graduates to earn a living after graduation. This university and not that only through skills training can the cycle of poverty be broken for the poor.

To help fund, some 400 students are enrolled at Tuvo both, and about 30 percent of them are backed by sponsors who can finance their schooling. Scholarships cost as follows: P18,000 for five years, P22,000 for second year, P24,000 for third year, P27,000 for fourth year, and P22,000 for the fifth year. Sponsor an Iloilo Tech student and help create a bright productive future for him. Call Fr. Tuvo at 721-2127 or 721-2198.

* * *

There will be a grand reunion of alumni of the UP College of Pharmacy this Saturday, June 19, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Bahay ng Alumni in UP Diliman, led by the following officers: Dr. Lourdes Cruz, president; Dr. Cecilia Chua, 1964, the early 1980s; Dean 1994, the golden jubilarians; and Class 1944, the diamond jubilarians. The golden jubilarians-to-be are invited to participate in the "special joy" that is reserved to mothers of half a century ago and they have prepared a surprise dance number, for which they have coined "Sentinel" basics and music for an rehearsals. Everyone is required to wear white shirts and blue trousers/skirts. For information, call the UP College of Pharmacy, 525-4434 and 526-6138.

Gawad for Bishop Labayen

Human Face

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

ANOTHER[illegible] summarizes the best in a human being—nobility, courage, integrity, strength of character, greatness of spirit. It is derived from the word "magnus."

What does it mean to be magnus? Filipino hero Emilio Jacinto defined it to the core of the for summative Kalipunanese: "...may magandang-asal, may isang pangangatwiran, may dangal at puri, at mayroon at di mapapagsuko, matwirong mag-isip at gumagawa ng may buhay, pagod at talino" or, roughly translating the original Tagalog, "...of good character, has word of honor, integrity and purity does not oppress and does not allow oppression, sensitive to others and dedicates his her life, energy and talent toward being a good citizen and child of God."

Last June 12, the 106th anniversary of Philippine Independence, Bishop Julio X. Labayen, retired bishop of the Diocese of Infanta-Quezon, received the Gawad Kalinangan Award. The venue couldn't have been more appropriate: the Quezon Convention Center in Quezon City, where the names of those who served and died for freedom are etched.

Behind the award was Management and Organization Development for Empowerment, an NGO founded by Jaime Bautista, which gives the award to those who exemplify the Filipino ideals of nationhood. In a society where, as Bautista described it to the audience, "the ordinary is the ideal, the bishop is considered a voice in the wilderness." I had stated the metaphors there but the bishop seems to have been pleased with it because he used it to inscribe in his book.

If you want to get to know the bishop more, read his book, "Revolutionary and the Church of the Poor." This is about what the bishop thinks is an all important ingredient for a revolution to work: gun-totin. The other day, I pulled out the book from the shelf to refresh my memory.

I guess the bishop's being a Canadian—steeped in the spirituality of Canadian mystic Thomas Merton and Child of God—he is at ease with but being perceived as a "leftist" by right-wing military strongmen and even by his retired colleagues.

As he writes, the bishop does not make an apologia or defense of church people criticizing the government. He makes no apologies for the stand he has taken. What he wants to say is "a letting good when has become irrelevant and obstructive, a going beyond... a daring to what has ceased to serve life." He points out the failure of revolutionary movements to deliver "more than just shells," that don't work anymore. Or were buried in left-lit, best re.

Labayen speaks, drawing from his almost four decades of pastoral experience as bishop-prelate of Infanta, interwoven "with the dark threads of trials, crises, heartaches, persecution and misunderstanding," and also with the bright strands of pastoral breakthroughs, deep insights, gutsiness, turning points, treasuring faith experiences of the living God of history."

Labayen presents two models of the Church: the conventional Church, the institution model and the Church of the Poor. He points out that "while the Church may be historically shaped and conditioned by history, the same Church was founded by Jesus Christ to shape history."

And so when did revolutionaries go wrong? Before Europe and China and Rangoon in Latin America, Nicaragua especially, where the Church played a vital role in the revolution. The outcomes, he says, either fall short of the initial noble intentions or sometime after victory, does change the masses.

In brief, he wants the Christians for Struggle Liberation for Today "to influence the revolutionary process to make it more humane, compassionate and less rigid." He notes that cultural and psychological perspectives are often not taken to be considerations in revolutionary affairs.

It is obvious that Labayen, priest and economist, Labayen points out. The human heart and the human spirit also need to be liberated.

And as he does not see of preserving another paradigm: Christ. Nor the Christ conveniently portrayed as a sadist to justify societal classes. Not the Christ who the powerful use historic events to use in the human heart and spirit.

He does suggest that services "understand the contributions of the mystics and psychologists... It may well be that here we encounter a yet unexplored inner territory that we have not harnessed for revolution. Could it be that herein lies the ingredient that is lacking for the satisfactory and fulfilling outcome?"

I was stumped by that. For I had long wanted for a comprehensive answer.

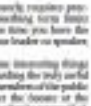
Dig into your inner well, the bishop exhorts and offers words from John of the Cross' Spiritual Canticle: "For here we will go on/ to the high caverns on the rock/ Which we as well concealed/ There we shall enter/ And taste the fresh juice of the pomegranate." And I am thinking.

If, as they say, John of the Cross, if pocket and stopped the Christian layers, actually a Buddhist monk, I think, Bishop Labayen, if unzipped of his activist label, is truly a contemplative, a monk in prayer, on his knees in the Maundy Thursday of Bataan.

* * *

A few days from now, for the first time ever in the Philippines, more than 5,000 priests and 130 bishops will gather for five days in mission prayer and reflection to renew their faith and mission, as bishops in communion, responding to the call to discipleship under "this sun, true Shepherd."

Your honor



The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

BEST readers are familiar with noted film director and National Artist Eddie Romero and reformist Rudy Romero, but I envy me of outstanding people of their father, Ana E. Romero, who was, before the rule of the late Justice Jose B.L. Reyes, "a college debater, lawyer, politician (in the better sense), newspaperman, orator and diplomat." I have observed and, and I say it again, that Romero's memoirs, titled "Not So Long Ago: A Chronicle of My Life," Vols. 1 and 2, Cacho Hermanos Inc., is one of the finest examples of political biography in our country. It was first published in 1979, and republished a few years ago. If you look hard enough, you can find it in many National Bookstores branches and or bookstalls in Malate. The House of Representatives should really get hold of Romero's book and make it required reading for all members of the House.

The reason I say that Romero's memoirs should be made required reading is that Congress requires an appreciation of history and literature as the effective use of both procedure and parliamentary procedure for the discharging of its functions. The first—a knowledge of precedent—involves not only the past actions and traditions of a chamber but also that of the country as a whole, and the institutions of the House. This includes an appreciation of the broader histories and traditions of other legislatures. Unfortunately, when it comes to a broader appreciation of the proper place and role a legislative chamber should have in our society, we have members of the House (like Reps. Al Tinkler and Rodolfo Fontecha of San Juan) seem to espouse the appropriate hunting.

As for the second—a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure—that requires nothing more (and nothing less) than a familiarity with Robert's Rules of Order, the rules governing each Congress, and the application of the same on both a broad and case-to-case basis. (One is why some legislators have full time parliamentarians who advise on some kind of reference recall to make questions concerning parliamentary procedure).

Parliamentary skill, unfortunately, requires practical experience, and is something term limits tend to make difficult; by the time you have the capacity to be an effective floor leader or speaker, your time is up!

Here, for example, are some interesting things from Romero's memoirs. Regarding the truly awful habit of both legislators and members of the public to address members of either the Senate or the House as "Your honor," this is what he notes: "I attended the last sessions of the Philippine Senate and translations from the Spanish. The expression 'Your Honor,' a literal translation of la Señoria usted (Spanish), as well as the expression 'I move a vote,' from the Spanish phrase Hacemos un voto en contra or en favor, I point out the care of those used to hearing English-speaking legislators because, of course, the proper expression are: 'The gentleman from such-and-such province,' and 'I reserve the right to speak,' or 'The title 'Your Honor' in English-speaking countries is reserved for judges, mayors and some other officials, but not for the members of the legislature."

Romero also made the following observations: "I might add that I deplored the practice of appealing to the public and prejudicing issues pending consideration by the courts and committees of Congress. Such practices tend to make the galleries, members of Congress legislate for the form of people, and to allow a few hundred people in the galleries to influence a member's action. Such practices have very damaging effects on the work. To be more experienced Congress, again the first indication of noise in the gallery, the presiding officer seems that the gallerites will be cleared if there is any further demonstration of approval or disapproval." It is interesting to note that Manuel Roxas, a political rival of Romero's, reformed the gallery rules when it was proposed to usually demonstrate in his favor on the day he was elected as speaker in 1955.

Finally, some comments on interpellation by Romero. Romero, in the course of a speech, defended the right of the legislature to inquire into the policies of the executive branch, and to interpellate members of the cabinet. He said: "I was not, however, a political rival of Romero's, or behind

Travel cost has become prohibitive

DESPITE widespread opposition, the oil cartel composed of Shell, Petron and Caltex has increased pump prices by seven times this year, leading to corresponding increases in the prices of basic commodities like meat, sugar and cooking oil, the oldest affliction has been the curse in private transportation here.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board approved the first increase effective last June 12, 2004. The new fare matrix for public utility aspirin would be P5.50 from the previous P4 for the first 4 kilometers, and an additional P1 for every additional kilometer. For basic, it would be P6 for the first 5 km and an additional P1.25 for the succeeding kilometers.

We may see small figures, but if we analyze it up, it is no longer a laughing matter.

Travelling to a nearby or even provincial, National Capital Region commuters need an average of $2 in a day divided into two trips, namely in the morning and another in the afternoon or evening. We also change our mode of transportation once per trip. If we capture this in monetary terms, it will look like this:

We divide $2 by two (two trips, which would be 2) fare. Per trip, we use at least two modes of transport—a jeepney and a bus. The jeepney trip would cost about P12.50, plus the fare for the bus which would cost another P13.50, thus would be a total of P26 for the morning trip alone. Adding up the trip back home, the cost of daily transportation would be about P52 a day. The per June 12 commuter cost was P36. In other words, the recent increase in transportation fares has made travel costlier by P22 a day. (Please take note that we are using conservative estimates, excluding the more expensive MRT and PNR rates.)

If we multiply the additional P22 to 30 working days, that would amount to P660 a month, which is more than the price of half a sack of rice. If we have three family members traveling every day, that would mean P1,320 of additional expenses for transportation alone. Save can the P660 minimum wage meet an ordinary family's daily needs in the present inflow of sky-rocketing prices?

The P5.25 wage increase demanded by workers should immediately be approved, if only to offset the recent trends of increase in basic commodities. We should also repeal the oil deregulation law, nationalize the oil industry and manage it for the benefit of people, not for the profits of the global oil monopolies.

—NOLLY COLINA,
Ecumenical Institute
for Labor Education and Research Inc.
61 Sarmiento, Project 3, QC

Sorry state of Philippine sports manifested in amateur swimming

THE MILO 2004 Metro Swimming Meet in Ultra held last May 29% was an eye-opener. It showcased here were the state of "sports" in our country is.

Our team was composed of children from the villages in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, Tarlac, Pampanga, who number this summer in the Milo Learn to Swim Program. The children took the basic/advance then competition classes. They took part in the competition primarily because it was the brainchild and those who are "trained to swim." We were assisted by our Milo coach that the times is solely for beginners. Thus the referees can disqualify inexperience swimmers as they can easily be spotted by the way they dive and swim.

But, lo and behold, our team was received with kids with developed muscles, V-shaped bodies—individuals that they have been under extensive training for a long time. They were young members' Selec and the Ensemble and barely breathed. Our coach had to be "trained to swim" on how to dive [one of swimming 101]. yet we saw others doing it like the Philippine Swimming Team. I even overheard a coach boasting that his team's swimmers were training here.

Allen's slogan is "Mr bold champions." But of what kind, may I ask, achievement of the so called "champions" who emerged from the competition joined in on a lie and with some people. If that was not cheating, then what?

My daughter participated in three events and brought home a medal, albeit a gilded one in the 6 years old brackets. Obviously only new starters joined the brackets as it's difficult to project kids 7-8 years old so do behind and excessive claiming.

To our children who gave a good fight in spite of it all, we are so proud of all of you. You showed us what sportsmanship is all about. Your contract was a blast because you were honest and the darn's gone you all accepted.

Can Milo do changes the next time it sponsors this kind of competition so that it will produce true champions?

ROLANDO R. DILIS,
139 Cherie St., Santa Rosa Estates,
Sta. Rosa, Laguna 4026

Sotto's performance in Senate processes

I HAD occasion to the Japanese editorial of June 12, 2004, citing Sen. Marino C. Sotto III as one of the "senators who" did not make much of an impact on policy."

It is not so much that it attended hours for his political leanings, which may be different from the layman's, but the baseless criticism that Sotto did not do anything during his two years in the Senate is most unfair to him.

In his 12 years as a legislator, from anxiety rank on the ordinal task of proposing vital pieces of legislation, conducting public hearings, sponsoring, interpellating, debating and defending bills and resolutions, attending committee hearings and bicameral conferences, guiding and facilitating deliberations and debates during plenary sessions, even representing the Senate during national and international occasions.

It cannot be denied that his active participation during the debates on the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 resulted in the adoption of several of his major amendments in the final version of the bill that became law. Sotto's sponsorship on the floor of the bills for the conversion of several municipalities into cities such as Makati, Marikina, Parañaque, Pasig, Mandaluyong, among others; the bills for the establishment of several district hospitals in various strategic places of our country which greatly contribute to the growth of our tourism industry; and the bills granting legislative franchises vital to our country's industrialization and savings for investments, all of which he vigorously defended during the plenary debates until they were all passed into law, showed his determination to push these measures through the legislative mill. His vigorous sponsorship of the bill that is now the Anti-Fire Act, despite his constituency reservations on the subject of public and private vehicles to use gas fuel devices, despite latent objections from the public utility sector concerned, is also on the record. He was one of the first authors and supporters of the Absentee Voting Bill (s. 1995), a measure that finally became a law 11 years after. His long and in depth interpellations and significant amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act are also reflected in the records of the debates.

All these are in addition to the embellishment of his job's prime work in the Senate. Indeed, it is very easy if one really wants to, to verify from the records the extent of parliamentary participation in the Senate plenary debates and committee hearings, not by merely going over the transcripts of the debates and interpellations of the various bills he sponsored, authorized, amended and defended on the Senate floor. Else, the senator comes from the humble industry of entertainment, but it is not fair to judge and condemn him without looking into the record of his work as a legislator.

—MYRA M.D. VILLARICA,
chief of staff,
Office of Sen. Ma. Ana C. Santos-Ch.,
Rm. 230, EDSA Bldg.,
Senate Boulevard, Pasay City

Patriots or 'patriotian'?

IT has been limited down in the media that ala hard Fernando Jr. Jr supporters have formed a group called Patriots, in preparation for the staging of another Edsa.

This reminds me of the Patriot missiles in the Gulf War, which foiled the scuttle attacks of the Iraqis against Kuwait and the Allied forces.

But in the Philippines, I would rather I was in the grudge before 9/11/2001 it, one of the terrorist's (Filipino and Yemen...) names escapes my recall who, at the time, the word "patriotism," referring only veiled sarcasm to those who pretended to serve the country but, in truth, were only after their own selfish interest. "Tan" to Cotabato term for "patriotic."

The media further reported that PFJ went to Mindanao and, there, pronounced himself as the winner over Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. PFJ and party planned to drop by in Cebu on their way back to Manila, but changed their minds, probably because the Cebuanos would overwhelmingly for GMA.

The only certainty hopes that those claiming to be "Patriots" but true to the word, driven by love of country, just like the "patriotism" refused to be the focus.

—FACUNDO S. TALLO,
102 North St., Angeles Village,
Talisay City, Negros Occ.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Tax scam uncovered in Nueva Ecija

By Arnaldrino Raquet
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CABANATUAN CITY—The Bureau of Internal Revenue in Nueva Ecija has uncovered a tax scam involving the use of fake documents in real property transactions.

Jose Paulino, chief of the BIR revenue district office here, said the irregularity involving the use of fake BIR certificates authorizing registration (CAR) for tax had deprived the government of millions of pesos.

The CAR is a certificate of payment and authority to transfer real property from one person to another. The form bears payment of capital gains tax and documentary stamps and is necessary before the registration of the property.

Paulino, who assumed his post in December last year, said he had reported the fraud to Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno. Police authorities, he said, have coordinated with the BIR in investigating the fraud.

Paulino said some certificates that were presented to him for verification appeared to be genuine BIR forms, but their original entries were erased and substituted with other entries, including the amounts of taxes that were supposedly paid.

The signatures appearing on the genuine forms were authentic, he said.

The taxes supposedly paid, however, were way below the required tax assessment and showed a clear loss of revenues to the government, Paulino said.

"It appears that this fraud has been going on for some time," he said. "We already gave vital information to the police to uncover fully the anomaly and charge those responsible for it."

Capt. Lincoln Pollanco, Nueva Ecija police director, appointed Chief Insp. Bobby Ignalan as head of the task force assigned to investigate the tax fraud.

Four officials of a rural bank in the province were sued for raids on the alleged irregularity.

Charged with estafa and falsification of public documents before the provincial prosecutor's office were Percival Peralta, Jr., Nemo Villena, Rogelio Manuzon and Virgilio Manalang.

Peralta is president of Mutual Bank Inc. while Villena is vice-president-officer in charge. Manuzon and Manalang are directors of the bank.

DA asked to regulate ostrich meat trade

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

PETER! Chamorro watches over his flock of ostriches in a farm in the Ilocos community. District breeding has become a lucrative business because of the backyard animals' green locally are exported. Ostriches are now being considered commercial replacements for chicken and beef in Baguio City, Benguet and other mountainous areas.

BAGUIO CITY—The Department of Agriculture has been asked to include ostrich meat in the country's export list as it installed domestic meat producers.

The Philippine Import-Export Dutch Foundation asked the DA to exploit ostrich meat as a viable beef alternative like carabeef, as ostrich farms prepared to increase beef access in three years.

Only three major ostrich farms have been set up in the Philippines, and the most established farms in the Cumbalinao Country in Gaganan of Tuba City and in Ilocos Sur under the export importer, and Peter Chamorro, one of the foundation's founders.

But small entrepreneurs have started developing small farms that cashed in on the domestic consumers, Chamorro said.

Ostrich meat could rival the beef industry in both urban and rural markets because ostrich farms are more cost-effective, said Nicholas Pizarro, a Foundation official and former assistant manager of Pepsi farms in Benguet.

Like beef

"They also taste like beef," Chamorro said.

But ostrich meat is currently not covered by regulations. Chamorro said local slaughterhouses have no provisions for ostrich carcasses. Meat importers from the National Meat Inspection Commission are also not equipped to process ostrich meat.

Chamorro approached the DA about including ostrich beef exports in its investment programs for cattle backers and hog growers, but was told that the government would need to open a new classification for the product.

Growing to still as 2.40 meters (8 feet), each New Zealand black ostrich and Australian ostrich now being grown in the country can supply 50 kilograms of red meat, much like the regular cow, he said.

But an ostrich lasts can grow three centuries to maturity in the same period it would take a heifer to grow a cow, Flores said.

He said the ostrich also lays as many as 60 eggs in a year, allowing for faster propagation.

Chamorro said ostrich farms are straightening their stock to bring down ostrich meat prices. A mature ostrich is worth P80,000, while its chick can be bought for P15,000.

Expensive

Ostrich meat is still considered an exotic product and consumers charge as high as P800 for a kilogram of ostrich steaks.

Its egg, which is equivalent to three large chicken eggs, costs P1,000 apiece.

But Chamorro said the ostrich's hypocholesterol content is for the more lucrative industry. He said ostrich leather would replace snakeskin for its strength and texture, while its feathers can be used for accessories.

Chamorro said that in 10 years of propagation would enable ostrich suppliers to match beef prices in the market. The foundation is documenting the progress of existing ostrich farms to determine quality breeding stock and to meet their supply needs.

Chamorro and the foundation is also monitoring the flocks in two ostrich farms in Pangasinan to determine the latter's environment's impact on livestock.

"Like most birds, ostriches are sensitive to noise, but these birds thrive on extreme weather. (The) farms in Subanda and the low temperatures in Baguio and Benguet)," said Jack Sabelito, the foundation's event-maker.

Kin of OFW killed in ship blast await body

By Yolanda Sonido-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

URDANETA CITY—Gloom has descended upon the family of Gerardo Mylang as it awaits his final return home.

Mylang, 47, died on June 13 in Oman in an explosion in the ship where he was working as storage man.

The long wait for his body has aggravated the anxiety of his wife Nora and their six children. "I was selected that the body would arrive anytime. I was told it was difficult to bring home a dead person," Nora said.

Mylang died with two others when the boiler of the tanker MT Purity blew exploded. Mylang also other Filipinos identified as John Pacheco of Bulacan and Joe Lanaja, died of suffocation, reports said.

Mylang had been a seaman for more than 20 years.

Nora and three children—Constantino, 18; Ella Mae, 17; Teresita Marie, 16; Cielo Lyn, 12; Gerardo Jr., 10; and Gerardo II, 8—were very close to their father.

She said Mylang had been regularly sending them cash.

"(He) sometimes called them early in the morning to wake them up," Nora said. The last time they saw him was on Jan. 9 when he left the country.

On the eve of his death, Mylang called up Constantino to ask if he had bought a battery for the family's jeepney.

Mylang wanted to talk to his wife but she was attending her grocery in the city market.

The told my son he would call up again later to talk to me, but he did not. I was not worried because (I thought) he was already on board and could not call me (to call up). I thought he would call me up at 11 that night when he would have finished his duty. He did not," Nora said.

On June 12, she received a call informing her of Mylang's death.

"I could not believe it. He never figured in an accident before," she said.

She said she tried to remain calm for her six children and relatives. Her sister-in-law's children there were already at home from school.

Mylang, she said, had simple dreams for his family. He wanted his eldest son to finish his four-year course in marine engineering course and also work in a commercial fleet.

Loud music drives away protesters

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAMBAN CITY—The Task Force Tarlac found a new way to disperse protesters here: loud music.

Most of local rice powerful speakers in front of local rice powerful speakers to drown their chants of anti-government slogans and they march to while serving cheerleaders.

On Tuesday, some 50 protesters belonging to the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Gabriela, Karapatan and Anakpawis Bayan trooped to the task force's headquarters at the Provincial Stadium here and called for its dissolution.

In their speeches delivered using government slogans and speeches, task force personnel played a song by the popular rap group Salbakuta.

Other equally loud songs, including the ones very popular Visayan singer Vic Sotto, followed.

As music drowned their speeches, female task force personnel approached the protesters and offered cheerleading and dancing.

The militants left without touching the snacks.

Mike Cardec, Karapatan secretary general for Southern Mindanao, said they were not totally bothered by the behavior of the Army.

He said they would continue to hold protests against the Task Force Tarlac, which he described as overstaying.

The unit was organized to secure the area after a series of terror attacks last year that killed more than 40 people, Anthony S. Alfanta, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Mining firms' shift to other industries faces questions

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—The abandonment of some of the country's oldest mines has confronted Benguet with a legal dichotomy.

Incoming officials are uncertain whether old mines can continue using the mineral processing permit of the American colonial government when they shift to new industries such as tourism and water distribution, the Benguet-based this week.

Benguet Vice Mayor Aloysius Bato, a newly elected board member of Benguet, said the Benguet government wants to settle these legal issues because it has enacted an investment code the town which has hosted Benguet Corp., the oldest mining firm, for over 100 years.

Benguet Corp. has suspended its Antamok and Acupan gold operations, along with five other operations, since 1996, while shutting up to 46-year-old copper mine there in seven years.

Montalan de la Cruz, Mines and Geosciences Bureau Cordillera director, said the agency had issued all of its transactions involving Paracelsa and/or Technical Assistance Agreement (TPAA) for some of Benguet Corp. relating that invalidated FINA processing.

In resolutions filed by the town council and the Benguet provincial board, the officials also directed the MGB to determine whether these operations still cover huge mineral deposits.

Keir said Benguet Corp., Philex, as well as firms with abandoned operations like the Benguet Exploration Inc. and Baguio Gold, have responded to the town government's queries.

The town is concept and is not a new land use plan that will simply reduce the scope of mining in its territories, even as it incorporates a new investment code, said Board Member Graciano Paraiso, the province's vice governor elect and a former mayor of Itogon.

Keir said Itogon welcomes new industries to set up in the old mining communities and has already identified three old mines are leading that shift.

Benguet Corp., for example, has been running from a mere way for more than a decade since it suspended its Antamok gold projects. It is the only gold-lead supply mine to Baguio City.

Other mine companies have participated in dialogues and workshops involving the reorganization of an Itogon ecozone, most that will replace these mines.

But the transformation of the mining industry here will not be painless.

Some lawyers in Benguet have asked the government to clarify whether these mines should also retain their properties, even rights over their original mineral areas, since the Department of Environment and Natural Resources controls their land use.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Nag-aso: The boiling lake of Albay

By Gil Yrastorza G. Acevedo
Manila, Albay

MANITO may be a far-flung town and considered one of the poorest in Albay but tourists are flocking to it for its peculiar lake, a boiling body of water that can cook eggs in 10 minutes.

Villagers call it Lake Manito, but the natural wonder has been popularly known as Nag-aso, a Bikol term for steaming.

Located at the boundary of Barangays Balabagan and Budiao, more than 46 km from the provincial capital of Legazpi City, Nag-aso Lake is being developed as a tourist spot by the Albay Tourism Office. A road leading to the only boiling lake in the province is now being constructed.

With an area of almost three hectares, Nag-aso Lake is at least one-and-a-half kilometers up and more than three hours by passenger jeepney. To reach the place, one has to traverse more than 43 km of rough roads, especially in Manito.

The easiest way of travel to the lake is by motorboat, which leaves Legazpi at about 12 noon daily. The ride takes about an hour. If one comes from the Albay tourist on Cagraray Island in Bacacay town using a motorboat, it takes about 20 minutes to reach Nag-aso.

THE BOILING lake of Manito, Albay.

For visitors in the plane, an overnight stay is suggested because of the limited transport services available.

Extreme heat

With its temperature of 100 degrees Celsius, no creatures survive in the lake. Its nearby areas are found pools that have withstood the heat.

During high tide, the lake is submerged by seawater from the Albay Gulf, but the bubbling, boiling water is still visible.

From the numerous rivers connected to the lake hold true to their names.

Vicente Abion, a first-time visitor to Nag-aso, was astounded when he placed four eggs in the lake's water.

"After 10 minutes, the four eggs were already hard-boiled. The water is really very hot, but what amazes me is that it is not foul-smelling as I expected it to be," he said.

The trees around the lake have remained green though they touch the boiling water.

The lake's waters have remained separate but, like Bicol and soils, as well as the river tributaries, are amber and gold because of concrete heat and steam pressure.

Elders of Balabagan do not celebrate the boiling waters of the Nag-aso Lake as the provenance of the Sto Nino gentleman plant at the boundary of Bacon and Manito towns, and Sorsogon province. They claim that even before the construction of the plant owned by Philippine National Oil Co. in 1969, the lake was already there.

They have seen how the lake grew bigger through the years, they said, but that it never caused land or boiling and bubbling.

Helpful

For the townsfolk, Nag-aso is more than just a tourist destination.

The steaming water is used to clean pigs that are butchered for the celebration of Balabagan's fiesta on May 15. The place where the pigs are slaughtered is only a few meters from Nag-aso.

At least 60 pigs are butchered every year in the town. During the last month's fiesta, more than 70 pigs were prepared for the celebration.

Sometimes, the fiesta here appears like the fiesta of the whole Manito town, for there's really a grand celebration during which many visitors are served," said Aldo Bolante, acting chair of Balabagan. For 27 years, he has been butchering pigs during the barangay fiesta.

"Fiesta time here is the only time when our children and relatives come back here for a vacation for at least a day or two," Bolante pointed out.

Unfortunately, the villagers take the alluring beauty of the lake for granted, he said. So there, it is used only for cleaning slaughtered pigs as fiesta time.

Tribe consent needed in new gold rush site

BAMAD CITY—The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) said miners entering the new gold rush site of Mt. Diwata in Mawa, Compostela Valley, should secure the consent of the tribe in the area before engaging in any extractive activities.

NCIP officer for Compostela Valley Shirley Ignacio said Dr. Uru, which is in Barangay New Bataan, fell within the ancestral domain of the Manobos.

She said the area was covered by the application for Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title of the town's Manobo tribe, which has already been validated and delineated by the NCIP.

At least 1,000 people trooped to Dr. Uru since news broke out that gold was easily mined there.

The news started from tricycle drivers who ferried the mountain's four municipalities.

Ignacio said that unless miners get New Price and Informed Consent from the Manobo people, their activities in Dr. Uru would be considered illegal.

A team of mining experts and officials had already talked with leaders of the Manobo and were given a go signal to engage in extraction activities.

Aside from small-scale miners, the area is open to corporations—Apex Mining and North Davao Mining—have staked claims over the new gold-rich area.

Big mining companies operating in the same gold-rich area of Mt. Diwata in the neighboring town of Monkayo, also in Compostela Valley, were preparing to send people to Mawa, according to authorities.

The influx of prospectors and miners has sketched authorities because of fear of another Diwata, also known as Diwalwal, in the making.

Hundreds of people were killed in the Diwalwal gold rush of the 1990s as a result of squabbles for territory.

Tony Bluecolor, a member of the Provincial Resources and Mining Board, said they would immediately meet to settle boundary disputes among small-scale miners to prevent violence.—Anthony S. Alladin, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Mayor vows to block rail rehab project

By Felipe V. Calleja
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—Mayor Antonio del Rosario has strongly opposed the renewal of Penay Rail's ways line. (PRL), saying that the proposed fund of P650 million to revive the island's railway system was not worth it and would only place farmers' properties in debt.

Del Rosario, who once established a train in Mayo 16 shortcuts, said that instead of inserting huge foreign loans to rehabilitate the 104-km railway system, the government should instead improve, as a much lower cost, the existing highways connecting the four provinces of Panay.

The mayor also pointed to the high social cost of reviving the railway. In Roxas City alone, he said, at least 600 houses would have to be demolished to give way to the railroad project.

Final term

Del Rosario, who would begin his third and final term in July, vowed to block the proposed rehabilitation of PRL's for as long as he was mayor of the city.

Del Rosario said he would ask the members of the city council to pass a resolution opposing the project.

The mayor said he planned to solicit the help of legislators occupying high positions in government to jointly oppose the rehabilitation of the railway system.

PRL should also first conduct a public hearing on how the project would be advantageous to the Capiznon, Del Rosario said. Right now, he added, he would not care any benefits from having to incur a huge foreign loan just to revive the company.

PRL general manager Hannibal Barrera had earlier admitted that several city residents would be displaced once the railway's rehabilitation started.

Consequence

But Barrera said residents had long been aware of the consequences of their stay along the railway tracks. Most of the residents, he said, were PRL tenants who signed a waiver that they would voluntarily vacate the area when the time comes for the rehabilitation of the railway.

The PRL project is expected to displace several families living along the railroad tracks from Roxas City to the city's downtown area to Barangay Ilaharan in neighboring Sapian town, a distance of about 10 km.

The city council has already passed a resolution banning the entry of the railway in the city proper upon learning that the project would be revived.

APPEAL TO CUSTOMS BUREAU

Farmers urge action on sugar seizure

By Hil Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SAN ISIDRO, Batangas—Sugar farmers from Southern Luzon yesterday asked the customs bureau to act decisively on the alleged attempt to smuggle 30,000 bags of sugar into the country.

Farmers' sugar cooperatives, worth P20 million, were hoodwinked by the Philippine Navy and the Philippine National Police to the Bureau of Customs as the Batangas port in Barangay Sta. Clara, Batangas City on June 4.

Two days earlier, the three ships that carried the cargo—MV Elisa, MV Irina and MV Victoria—were intercepted in the Sulu sea/Bay.

Statements from the Batangas provincial police said that while they were conducting an antismuggling operations at 2.8 nautical miles southeast of Pedrino Point in the Balayan Bay at 7:56 p.m., policemen led by SPO3 Nicholas Chan, members of the Naval Intelligence Security Unit led by Lt. Ayoub Sarayten, and officers of the Philippine Navy patrol ship Magsaysay Bladar under the command of Capt. Miguel Enquimmer spotted the three ships loading and unloading the sugar.

The 30,000-50-kg sacks of sugar, which bore "Thai markings," were supposed to be bound for Manila, but the ships' crew members had no shipping documents or permits to show to the customs smuggling team.

Since June 4, the ships have been docked at the Batangas port with their 21 crew members and the refined sugar from Thailand.

Unload the sugar

"We're asking Bureau of Customs district collector Napoleon Morales to unload the 30,000 bags of refined sugar from the three ships, put them on storage, and tell us what the process were/ plans to do with the sugar," Belinda Ballelos, president of the Luzon Federation of Sugarcane Growers' Association Inc. (Luzonfed), said in a statement.

Assuming to him, Luzonfed is composed of sugar farmers, cooperatives and associations in Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon.

Ballelos added that the Philippines did not have to import sugar from Thailand and other countries.

"The Philippines' sugar farmers can support the Filipinos' demand for sugar. We have been self-sufficient in the sugar sector for so many years that there is no need to import sugar. That's why some shrewd businessmen would do everything just to smuggle them," he said.

Self-sustaining

According to Ballelos, even though Batangas Sugar Central Inc. in Balayan municipality and Central Azucarera de San Pedro (CASP) in Batangas town and in other facilities all over the country are enough to meet the demand for the commodity.

"We are in the sweetest mode now," Ballelos said. "The smuggling of sugar just made the situation worse. And that can only be solved through vigilance from all sectors, especially the Bureau of Customs."

In the Luzonfed's six-year statement, the sugar farmers commended the Navy and the PNP for the June 4 incident.

On June 15, Ballelos requested Ramon Peverell Jr., CASP executive vice president for operations, to use the 50-kg sack of refined sugar that was among the 30,000 confiscated by the authorities in the aforementioned operations.

The test was conducted at the chemical laboratory of the CASP's quality control department.

"After the analysis, it turned out that the sugar was premium refined sugar," Ballelos said.

When reached by the Inquirer, customs collector Napoleon Morales refused to reveal the name of the consignee of the cargo or shipment and even defended the crew of the three ships.

"Yes they didn't have the documents unless they were apprehended for the Navy, but that's because they were still at sea and they don't usually carry documents when they're at sea," he said.

Indon firm to sue over seized cargo

MANDAUE—Indon firm is studying the filing of administrative or criminal charges against customs officials, organizations and individuals for impugning the shipment of 600 metric tons, or 10,000 bags, of refined sugar that, it contended, passed the requisites of international trade.

"We are contemplating the filing of charges against those who apprehended the vessel [MV Elisa] since they do not have the authority and valid reason to do so," Senator Luisito Emmanuel Jones said in a statement.

He said PC Wisely Bags Inkal, the Subanonian firm, informed Senate hours in terms of documents of the duties in the arrival of the sugar cargo at their port of discharge in Jakarta.

The sugar cargo was sold to the trader firm by Allied Western Group Ltd., said Jones.

On May 25, the Elisa was a days-out call to the Coast Guard after encountering engine problem at sea.

Crew members tried to rebuild the ship that continued to rile and sink slowly.

Several days later, the vessel was escorted sugar was transferred to the MV Victoria and the MV Elisabeth to prevent Elisa from sinking off the Batangas port.

But post and business accountant Ingle were he added, he would not care any benefits from having to incur a huge foreign loan just to retire the company.

PRL general manager Hannibal Barrera had earlier admitted that several city residents would be displaced once the railway's rehabilitation started.

Consequence

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that they would voluntarily vacate the area when the time comes for the rehabilitation of the railway.

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METRO
Editor Alexander B. Villamiel

Metro bombings baffle police

POLICE ARMED members of the police Special Weapons and Tactics team in Makati City get a briefing before being deployed at the corner of Makati and Ayala Avenues. Security forces in Metro Manila were on high alert after a series of bombings Tuesday night. EDWIN BACASMAS

By Tina Santos and Margaux Ortiz

METRO Manilans, already depressed by the new round of fare increases and a possible rise in electric and gas bills, have now to contend with a new fear: the rash of random bombing and shooting incidents in the metropolis.

Police said they have yet to establish a motive behind the grenade-throwing incident near Kalayaan Avenue, Quezon City on Tuesday night where at least four people, including two children were hurt. Two grenades were hurled near the Sunset Clubhouse, but only one had exploded.

And despite additional security deployed at Makati's Central Business District (CBD) following the attack on the old headquarters of Bayan Corp. last week, unidentified persons still managed to shoot at a parked vehicle near a hotel the other night while its owner was dining at an upscale mall.

Another grenade hurled from a passing car exploded onto a gas station in the northern Quezon City of Diliman, damaging a truck.

No leads

National Capital Region Police Office Director Ricardo De Leon said police were still investigating the incidents and would not say if the attacks were related. "As of now, we have no lead," he said.

He also would not link the attacks to rumors of a planned power grab, although NCRPO spokespersons that Sunnewspapers said they were not ruling out recoups or the destabilization plot angle.

Senior guard Reynaldo Calinga said he saw the attackers of a blue van packed between Carolinas and Makati Shangri-La Hotel. He by what he believed was a steel bullet after he heard the sound of gunfire at 9:25 p.m.

The van owner, Mary Grace, 43, said she was coming with her family inside Glorietta Mall when the incident took place.

Intensified training

The Philippine National Police had earlier deployed 38 members of the Regional Special Action Unit to ensure security in the CBD. Makati police had also been using additional vehicles from the Makati Public Safety office to guard all the exits of Ayala Center.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay has directed the city police force to intensify their training on bomb detection and security countermeasures in companies and embassies as part of their drive to detect criminal activities in the area in the financial district.

With a report from AFP

1.4 tons of blasted fish seized

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE COAST Guard has seized 1,4,000 kilos of dynamited fish at the North Harbor in Manila in what an official described as one of the biggest hauls of illegally caught fish in recent history.

Coast Guard Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo said it was apparent that blast fishing was still being practiced in the country.

"The volume of the confiscated fish is big. They must have come from different areas in the country," Tamayo told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Certified illegal

The fish, which officials of the Bureau of Fisheries have certified as having died from dynamite blast, was seized at Pier 12 at 1 p.m. on Tuesday.

It was seized as it was being unloaded from the MV Princess of the Stars, which had come from Iloilo City. The fish was supposed to be delivered to the Navotas Fish Port.

A man identified as Melchor Bebadora, a resident of Ilaniola Lopez Street in Iloilo, Tondo, was arrested after he failed to negotiate his the release of the cargo.

Donated

The seized fish has been donated to the Philippine National Red Cross, the Hospicio de San Jose and the Western Police District.

Tamayo said blast fishing was doing serious damage to the country's food sustainability program as it disrupts the ecosystem.

Blast fishing destroys coral reefs which serve as homes and spawning grounds to marine life.

"Can you imagine how much of our reefs must have been damaged?" Tamayo said, noting the volume of the caught fish.

According to him, Tuesday's haul was one of the biggest in recent history.

Palawan confiscation

Last year, he recalled, 15,000 kilos of dynamited fish were also seized in Palawan.

Tamayo appealed to any seafarer not to buy fish caught by blast fishers.

"If no one buys (dynamited) fish, this practice will stop," he said.

The coast guard chief said it was easy to determine whether fish sold in the market was caught through blast fishing.

The body of dynamited fish is soft, pliant and shows signs of damage. Its eyes and gills are red and its scale rupture, its internal organs are ruptured.

Francis Magalona gets off illegal drugs rap

FRANCIS Magalona waits for the session with his Pa. JOAN BONDOC

By Tina Santos

IT WAS one rap that Francis Magalona was glad he would not have to dance to.

The Quezon City Regional Trial Court yesterday acquitted the so-called king of Philippine rap music of possession of illegal drugs.

In his decision, Judge Ernesto Jean-Paul Iming of the RTC Branch 95 said the prosecution failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt Magalona's guilt. The rapper beats the rosentence TV talent show Eat Bulaga.

The judge added that the court had not acquired jurisdiction over Magalona's co-accused, Al-Jenido De Los Reyes, 34, of Cotabato Street, Diamagbia, Makati City, his economic at large.

Court record showed that Magalona, 35, of Cherry Woodlane Condominium Heights, Antipolo City, and De los Reyes were arrested for allegedly smoking marijuana in Magalona's car in New Manila, Quezon City.

PO2 James Buenvenu and PO1 Miguel Cordoni of the Criminal Investigation Detection Group (CIDG) claimed finding an improvised cooter and dried marijuana leaves on the two men.

In acquitting Magalona, the judge gave credence to the testimony report which showed that the accused was found negative for both marijuana and shabu in a drug test taken a few hours after he and De los Reyes were arrested.

3 car theft suspects dead in shootout

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE suspected car thieves were killed during a shootout with operatives of the Traffic Management Group in Mandaluyong City yesterday afternoon.

The suspects were on board a van when traffic policemen caught up with them in Tarakan Street, Barangay Tipunu, about 2 p.m., according to Gen. Teofilo Lasa, concurrently precinct commander Florencino Ajanado.

The vehicle, a gray Toyota Lite Ace van (PBU 833), had been reported stolen last March. TMG operatives saw the vehicle proceeding and gave chase from Calooocan City until they reached Valenzuela City nearby.

Overpowered

Police flagged down the suspects but the three began firing at the operatives instead, a document showed.

The three suspects, armed with .38 caliber handguns, were overpowered by the TMG men, none of whom were injured with rifles.

One of the slain suspects was identified as Tomas Sia Maria, and Caloocan City scene of the crime operations (SOCO) chief Filemon Portemerlo.

Grenade found

The suspect, who is from Baguio City according to an identification card found on him, is about 35-40 years old, he added.

The two other suspects who sustained gunshot wounds to the head and other parts of the body have not yet been identified.

Sia Maria was found dead in the driver's seat, while the two other suspects were outside the van. A hand grenade was also recovered inside the van.

What's another killing?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE KILLING of judges the past several years—the latest of whom was Tuguegarao, Batangas Judge Wilfredo Bonifacio—has so alarmed the Supreme Court and President Macapagal-Arroyo that she ordered the police to speed up the investigation and resolution of the murders.

Why give the order when it's the Philippine National Police's duty to arrest, detain and bring to court any killer, whether his victim was a judge or an ordinary citizen?

The presidential order, therefore, was irrelevant. What the President should have done was to ask the police chief of Tuguegarao, Batangas, and its places where the other killings happened.

* * *

The criminals have become inured to rampant criminality. Citizens are used to banks robbed in broad daylight, and slayings of media practitioners. They're used to seeing prohibited drugs sold openly and police arresting at the crime scene after the criminals have long gone.

Have you heard of cops arresting at the scene and shooting it out with the criminals?

But you've read about cops shooting down crime suspects. Mostly, the crime suspects' hands were tied and they could not shoot back or in the case of the 11 Binondoc Salseng gang members.

So, what's another killing even if the latest victim happens to be a judge?

* * *

The killing of judges is symptomatic of our sick society. Ours is a society that doesn't respect the rule of law.

Many people in authority—policemen, prosecutors, judges—deal arrested with the law because they think they're above the law.

Cops plant evidence, prosecutors uphold frame-ups, and judges send poor guys to jail. The situation is replicated thousands of times in city or cases and in various parts of the country.

The result is that the citizenry has lost respect for the law.

* * *

You know the general sentiment when a person is murdered is to killed? He deserved it.

"Ah, probably that cop was abusive." "Probably that judge or prosecutor was rewarding boss hurts the accused and complainant."

"Baka naman nanuyan yung judge."

I'm not saying that Judge Bonifacio was corrupt. Besides, I never tarnish a dead man's reputation.

I'm pointing out the general feeling of disrespect for the law and for people who carry out the letter of the law.

* * *

So, how do we restore the citizenry's respect for the law and lawmen?

By making people in authority aware that "we're a nation of laws and not of men."

If our officials can't change their behavior, we're doomed as a nation.

SPORTSWATCH

Paraga, Dablos leave for Libya

(MA CANDICANDO) Mark Paraga and Ronald Dablos are leaving today, accompanied by the World Chess Championships in Tripoli, Libya, on June 19 to July 13. The 20-year-old Paraga will meet Moldova's No. 1 player Victor Bologan, while 25-year-old Dablos will face Romania's top contenders Liviu Dieter Nisipeanu on the first round of the Elo system-based tournament. Paraga and Dablos are already assured of $6,000 for clinching World Championship slots. Also competing together are their second-to-none GMs Eugene Torre and Rosvy Villamayor.

WWW Marlon Bernardino

Abapo fights St. Claire July 17

MANILA Abapo, the Philippines' top-ranked super featherweight, takes a crack at the Pacific super featherweight crown of Australian champ Garry St. Clair on July 17 in Sydney, Australia. The 29-year-old St. Claire, a southpaw of Australian boxing legend Jeff Fenech, goes into the fight as the heavy favorite among bookmakers as he rambles up a 23-0-2 record with 13 KOs. Ranked #8 by...

Atenean beaters defeat UE

ATENEO de Manila University's undefeated University of the East, 3-1, at the 2004 Ang Liga football tourney. Sanchez, of Philippine, Pong Eby Alfredo Ilao, Albert Villaca and Alvin Pera delivered the goals for the Blue Eagles. In the other match, the season's #1 Under-23 squad defeated UE in La Salle University, 3-0, with goals from Elgie Cortez, Kalo Mercado and Emilio Ramos.

Red Ribbon U-14 football set

RED Ribbon Bakeshop's 2nd Under-14 football tournament will kick off its July. Philippine football federation (PFF)-accredited Johnson Realty-sanctioned tournament recently. After last year's successful four-month run, this season's Red Ribbon football is expected to stretch on additional months here. The nationwide tourney is among PFF's major tournaments for kids.

TRACK STAR Henry Dagrel (left) shakes hands with Las Salle Greens Archers team manager Terry Capistrano during a recent visit. Capistrano, president of TWE-Sing Systems, sponsored Dagrel's stint in the 2004 National Open.

Barkadahan derby tomorrow

THE "BARKADAHAN Pinoy 4-Cock Derby" cocks tomorrow at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit with more than 80 entries seeking action. Sponsors are Sagupaan Fanmore, Sagupaan Mini-Toro and Sagupaan 8-10 Derbies. Elimination of weights will be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. today. For reservations contact 0919-906...8459 / 851-4...0 / 852-50...5669 more than 150 fights lined up. The eliminations at 1 p.m. Derby fronts are located on Mc Arthur Highway, Balintawak Toll Gate and Dampalit.

Rodigen Cabrera and Dampalit

Rodigen hosts Hataw an sa Tag-Ulan

FOR 800 Mega Cockpit's richest derby this year, the "Hataw an sa Tag-Ulan 8-Cock Derby" is all set on June 19, 20, July 2, 3, 7 and 8. The elimination rounds will be hosted by Philippine cocker Rolly Lopez. A minimum of 100 entries are expected to join the affair. Today fee is P11,000. Meanwhile, the elimination and championship rounds of "Reinaker 4-Cock Derby" ended this Monday and Wednesday. June 21 and 23, at Rodigen. For an entry fee of only P15,000, the guaranteed prize is P1 million. Cockers and bystanders may still join the last day of elimination at Rodigen on Monday. For inquiries, contact 8333701, 4243838 and 8986768.

World Slasher semifinals today

MANY favorite Jose Santiago encountered tough sailing, tallying a loss and a draw to step alive for the Cockers of the Year race Tuesday night in the World Slasher Cup at the Nonoy Cockpit. Action is expected to heat up in the semifinals today. Santiago's trusty Thunderbird posted its first win in a duel with Cocker's Delight, which settled for a 2-0 result. Close to 8,000 packed the Big Dome on Pasig Blvd., another leading CCTV contender, suffered a surprise loss to Smarty Jones' Gito Villarin and Ronny Castro. Villarin's Alabarin at Jesa Ferrera still to salvage a win, however, to stay in contention. More unexpected results came on Wednesday when Wilson Yu's Pit-a-Pat Master was unable to garner a win, pulling Macasaet's COTY hopes to limbo.

FORMER champion Roger Roberto (left) and Ravi Mirabelli pit their cocks for the 2004 World Slasher Cup. Watching are Bb. Pilipinas Intercontinental 2nd runner-up Tracy Ann Jamilarra, 5th Pilipina-Universe Maricar Balagtas, Bb. Pilipinas-World Karla Bautista, Bb. Pilipinas-International, Miss Mega 1 st runner-up Margarita Jean Reyes and Bb. Pilipinas-2nd runner-up Princess Jasmine Thompson.

WELCOAT'S Chester Ritueria goes up against a VMA defender.

Welcoat eyes 2-1 lead over Viva-FEU

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WITH momentum on its side, Welcoat Paints goes for a 2-1 lead against Viva Mineral Water-FEU today at the resumption of the PBL 2nd Unity Cup championship series at the Pasig Sports Center.

The Paint Masters begin the second chapter of their semifinal duel with the White Lions Tuesday, 12:10, which ended the same effort in Game 1 of the best-of-five playoffs.

"It just shows how strong Welcoat really is," said Elan coach Koy Banal, acknowledging the strength of the Paint Masters. "We sure have they can dominate we are only offensively and also defensively."

An offensive was Welcoat's defense, as Mauro Flores scored in close for digits with newly crowned MVP Antonio Llamas rending up ninth put eight points.

Banal admitted he has to make key adjustments, noting Welcoat's domination of the shaded lane through Jr. Reyes, Marvin Ortigas and Abel Cuipa.

"It beat them again, we have to restart focused on all aspects of the game," added Banal.

Welcoat has so far made the biggest adjustment in the series by shifting from its usual run and gun style to a defensive, defense-oriented game. It even outrebound its overdrive scoring machine as Jojo Langcay made only three points in Game 2.

They may happy than we were the game although I only scored three points. It's not help the team by making a sacrifice than I will rest business to do it," said Langcay to Filipino.

Langcay, who set his hole down the line for last the MVP trophy for the second consecutive season in a row, was instrumental in his comeback for his last-second game.

"We're happy to get into the Final Four 3rd set don't want to take it easy because regardless of who we play, it's going to be a tough matchup for us considering the size of the opponents in the other brackets," said Unity Cup coach Chot Reyes.

Jerry Sunda led four Thunderbirds in double figures with 23 points.

THE SCORE

CHOCOLA 110—Garbiel 15, Linao (5) Guevarra 16, Cuna 14, Mabanglo 6, Gabriel 5, Mesia 6, Morales 6, Antonio 8, Ingcoran 2, Cuna 6, Ramos 6, Alcazar 2.

UBC 86—Alcala (5) Ilao 15, Ibanga (5) Ilao 15, Ibanga 13, Ibanez 6, Ingcoran 2, Cuna 6, Ramos 6, Alcazar 2.

Quarters: 29-10, 46-38, 84-75, 110-86.

Coke blasts UBC, gains semis

By Jane Navarro

COCA-COLA caught the fireworks of British Columbia Thunderbirds a near breaker in pre-leaders hold last night with a 110-86 rout in advance in the semifinals of the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Johnny Abarrientos took 10 Canadian Karlo Villanueva to school through a variety of moves and maneuvers that made an exhibition in the MAAP and an assortment of shots that would earn him MVP many bright season caps.

Abarrientos drilled in 19 points, including four three-pointers out of five attempts and a 100-percent shooting clip (3 of 3) from the perimeter.

"I wasn't really thinking about the match up because the team concentrated more on how to get into the semifinals. I just told myself that I have to get better each game," said the 5-foot-7 Abarrientos of his backcourt duel against the 5-foot-3 Villanueva.

The 22-year-old Villanueva, Canada's point in the collegiate ranks with his league-leading 6.1 assists per game, is in his second season, more than of nine from the first and finished with five points, five rebounds and six assists.

With the victory, the Tigers clinched a coast in the best-of-three, semifinal series while giving their unbeaten Batangas kindred kings a big ride to the next round.

The Tigers improved to 2-0 along with the Gin Kings, unanimously booking out the No. 2 seed Alaska Aces (0-2) from the quarterfinals.

The Tigers (four arranged) a crucial meeting with the Gin Kings for the right to secure the No. 1 ranking in Group B in the semifinals. The top semifinal squad of each group collides with the No. 2 team of the other bracket in a round-to-two-of-fair.

Mark Sanford shot 23 points and Jeffery Cariaso added 20 for the Tigers, who earned a 58th straight semifinal stint. The Tigers are seeking a fifth consecutive Finals appearance.

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RP Youth India campaign gets Burlington support

THE PUBLIFFIND youth team Chief will get his pass to its Asian Basketball Confederation series championship this September will get a big boost from Burlington Industries.

"Our company is always ready to assist the Basketball Association of the Philippines in many national endeavors such as the youth's participation in the biennial meet," said Buddy Tan, a noted sports patron and Burlington's chief operating officer, who will also oversee the position of team manager of the youth squad.

Burlington will finance the trip and handroll the participation of the RP Youth.

The country won a slot in the ABC tournament when it topped the recent Southeast Asian Basketball Association juniors championship in Laguna, Quezon, in April.

The Filipinos, rounded by Johnny Tan, whipped opponents from Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore to regain the crown they lost to Kuala Lumpur in 2002.

Skipper Kevin Arteaga, Darryl Bautista and Jayjay Alejandro were with the rest of the members.

Montanara whips YKL cagers

FOUR players combined for 65 points as Montanara whipped "PG, 103-94, at the close of the elimination round of the Ben Simpson Philippines Basketball Association (PBA) Friendship Cup Tuesday at the UST gym.

In the other game, Burlington, pumped up by the presence of team owner Buddy Tan, blasted Jersey, 75-56, as Nelsel Montes scored 18 points and Desmond Saunders chipped in 11.

Elmer Ignacio, Joseph Arpon, Jimmy Salazar and Oberdin Estrada combined to outscore the entire YKL squad by a point to help seal the win for Montanara, which is managed by Edmundo Aquino and coached by Merrick Carlos.

The two teams advanced to the quarterfinals along with league-leading Sportsfriends, 6WC, Mercury Magic, Intelpoint and newcomer Jay.

The Friendship Cup is a special project of Transfigura, a division of Intel Events and Athlete Management Inc. for the PBA and Burlington Inc. Aurelio Ubalde Inc., in cooperation with the Association of Physical Education and Athletics of UST.

Spring holds 100-K cycling

A CYCLING marathon covering a distance of 100 kilometers will be held on Saturday, June 19, to mark Laguna Day, which coincides with the birthday of the country's national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal.

Called the 1st Spring Cooking Oil Tour of Laguna 2004, the one-day event is expected to have around 100 amateur and professional riders who reside in the province.

The race will start in Binan and end in San Pedro, Laguna.

"We have chosen our support to this fabulous to our desire to help boost the sport and, at the same time, provide thrill and excitement to the cyclists-to-be of Laguna Boy," said national shooting champion Enchanted "Tai" Padilla, provincial manager of Binan Soup and Oil Industrial Co. Inc., makers of Spring Cooking Oil.

Organized by the Binan Swan Lioned Sports Association led by Ing Anchoris and Abe Alcantara, the fabulous is also supported by Gov. Ming Ming Lazaro, Vice Gov. Edwin Olivarez and Leon Mangahas.

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NISSAN

SPORTS TV
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SPORTS
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Pistons crush Lakers for third NBA crown

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan—Ben Wallace notched 18 points and 22 rebounds to help the Detroit Pistons crush the Los Angeles Lakers, 100-87, Tuesday to claim the NBA championship and end one of the great dynasties in league history.

Shooting attacking flair to go along with their trademark gritty defense, the Pistons completed one of the biggest upsets in the NBA finals to lift their first title since 1990 with a startling dissection of the heavily favored Lakers.

With three titles in the last four years and a roster stocked with All-Stars and future Hall of Famers, the swaddling Lakers arrived at the finals expecting to add to the franchise's glorious legacy.

But the Pistons, who rely on teamwork over glitz and glamor, utterly dominated the Lakers to win the best-of-seven finals, 4-1, and return the title to the Eastern Conference for the first time since 1998.

The Detroit victory ousted then-Hall of Famer coach Larry Brown the first NBA title in his 13 seasons while denying his LA counterpart Phil Jackson a record 11th championship ring.

It also gave Detroit's reclusive billionaire owner Bill Davidson his second championship in as many months, adding the Larry O'Brien trophy to the Stanley Cup his Tampa Bay Lightning picked up last month.

"This is a great night and the guys did a tremendous job," said the 81-year-old Davidson over the deafening cheers.

Brown said: "I told them before the game it would be a great moment if we had an opportunity to win because we do join the right way and our rings are in stars.

"Since this is towards the end of it for me, and we did win against such a quality coach and a quality team, it's a pretty incredible feeling." While it was the Pistons' crippling defense that earned them in the title, it was the team's offensive guard Chauncey Billups who walked away with Most Valuable Player honors.

The Pistons and Lakers stepped on to the court for Game Five aware that each team would have to settle a small piece of NBA history to claim the title.

For the Pistons, winning the championship at home would mean sweeping the three middle games of the best-of-seven series, something never before accomplished since the NBA introduced the best-three-into-finals format in 1985.

For the Lakers, the task was even more daunting, no team having ever clawed back a 3-1 deficit to lift the crown.

If the Lakers were going to send the finals back to LA they were also going to have to shed stubborn homes Lakford Pistons' big Shaquille. Brown

SEE Wallace reacts after a block over Lakers' Bryon Russell.

BILLUPS (7) receives the Finals MVP trophy from NBA commissioner David Stern (right).

Billups finals MVP

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan—Chauncey Billups put on a performance worthy of a champion in the 2004 National Basketball Association finals.

Detroit's Billups, who is one of the best point guards in the NBA, was crowned on Tuesday by being named the most valuable player of the finals.

"It doesn't get any better than this," Billups said. "For me to be the MVP is even more unbelievable. This is validation for me." Billups scored 14 points and six assists in game five as the Pistons beat Los Angeles, 100-87, to win the best-of-seven finals four games to one.

Billups is often-called player on a blue-collar team and the perfect MVP representation for an underdog Detroit club, which pulled off one of the biggest upsets in NBA finals history.

"There's what you dream about as a child. There are various stepping-stones in my life that made me feel like any, except getting married three years ago and my two kids. This is right up there with that." AFP

UEFA 2004 game schedules on Dream

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Breakup of LA dynasty looms

SHAQUILLE O'NEAL

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan—The breakup of the Lakers might begin any day now.

Phil Jackson, the most successful coach in NBA history and Karl Malone, the league's second-leading career scorer, both said there concern could be finished following Tuesday night's season-ending loss to Detroit.

Kobe Bryant separated his name case to opt out of his contract, and Gary Payton and Derek Fisher can do the same.

At least Shaquille O'Neal will be back, although he should sound chilled about it.

"This summer is going to be a difficult summer for a lot of people," O'Neal said. "Everyone is going to take care of their own business and everyone is going to do what's best for them, including me."

O'Neal didn't elaborate, but said he assured to speak with general manager Mitch Kupchak and "see where they want to go with things."

"Like I said, we are all going to do what's best for each other," O'Neal said.

The Lakers were prohibitive favorites to beat the Detroit Pistons in the NBA Finals, but lost in five games.

Clearly, the better team won.

The Pistons are Tuesday night, a 100-87 Detroit victory would only be described as embarrassing for the Lakers, who were out of contention by late in the third quarter and trailed by as many as 28 points in the final period.

The 34-year-old Jackson has completed the five-year, $30 million contract he signed in 1999. He was negotiating for an extension, but the Lakers broke off talks in February until after the season.

"My intention is to meet with the management of the Lakers after the season, discuss some things that we have to discuss as an organization," he said. "And then we'll make a decision from there."

"But right now, I would say that it's a pretty slim chance that I'll be back coaching next year. I've had a lot of persuasion given to me by those kids, they were hoping I would coach the 10th and tenth."

Jackson spoke at the postgame news conference with four of his five adult children beside him. AP

Karl's dream fades away

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan—Karl Malone agreed a $13.5 million pay cut in the off-season to take a chance at winning his first NBA championship by signing with the Los Angeles Lakers.

His dream faded away Tuesday night as the Detroit Pistons destroyed the Lakers, 100-87, in Game Five to win the NBA finals, 4-1.

Malone, who has been plagued by sprained right knee by summer since Game Two, took himself out of the lineup in favor of the Lakers' Tuesday's season 17th told years off-ends his injury was a was and was a sprain.

"It's pain, it's pain. Mike. It's tenderness. Those are the three factors," team spokesman John Black told reporters. Reuters

■ Tiger stakes top rank in US Open /A18
■ Welcoat eyes 3-1 lead over Viva-FEU /A16

FEU, Letran spikers fight for dear life

By Tina Arcelo

INJURIOUS Letran and Far Eastern University try to stave off elimination as they tackle separate matchups in the Shakey's V-League volleyball tournament at the Ynares Gym.

Letran will take on NCAA arch rival San Sebastian at 2 p.m., while FEU faces second-running La Salle at 4 p.m.

Both the Lady Knights and the Lady Tamaraws carry 1-4 win-loss cards, and are in danger of losing elimination if they fail to win their next three games.

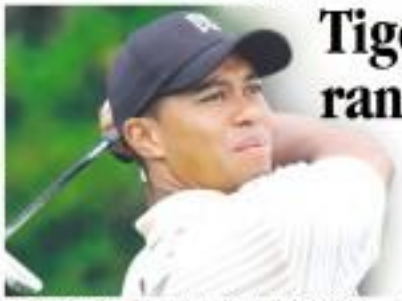
Only the top four teams advance to the semifinals.

University of Santo Tomas is already assured of the semifinals with its 4-0 standing, leaving the other teams to contend for the remaining three tickets to the Final Four.

The Lady Tigresses, champions in the UAAP last season, are highly favored to repeat over the Lady Tamaraws, whom they beat, 20-15, 25-17, 19-25, 25-19, for their 3-win-1-loss record.

La Salle's dreaded triumvirate of UAAP MVP Ensley Hernandez, Marella Santos, and Carissa Gotis make the 5th-based spikers attack-line formidable, allowing them to snatch a 4-1 tally.

FEU, on the other hand, needs to get its offense in order.



WOODS hits off the 18th tee during practice round in preparation for the US Open. AP

Tiger stakes top rank in US Open

SOUTHAMPTON, New York—Tiger Woods came to the US Open fully ready to deal with the swirling winds, waist-high grass and quirky bounces at Shinnecock Hills.

He wasn't quite as eager to address another matter that got almost as much attention Tuesday—the growing concern about the state of his game.

"Am I tired of it? Yeah," Woods said.

He followed his words with a smile, but it's clear Woods has had enough of the same questions over and over.

There's come after every way-ward tee shot, every lackluster approach and every inconsistent Woods has failed to see.

They came again after a practice round at treacherous Shinnecock Hills, where Woods won't be contending if he keeps hitting the ball sideways off the tee as he has in recent months.

"Certainly I try and just kind of take it in, but the problem is you guys keep asking me about it," Woods said. "Every tournament I go in you keep asking the same questions."

The questions come because the player who used to dominate the majors doesn't seem to be the same player anymore. Woods hasn't won a major in two years, and you can't taste to as a consistent streamers without seeing him shaking it out from under cover.

Yes, also can't stop hearing commentators imagine his swing, and question who he refuses to seek help from Hank Haney or Butch Harmon in the Memorial. Woods' caddie put his golf bag in front of a camera as his swing wouldn't be picked apart.

The laugh on way about how they can think they know every thing, but they don't," Woods said.

Woods' biggest problem, though, may be the fact that it might be tougher for Tiger Woods, but it's even tougher to follow him.

When the Open is held in up in a US Open on Long Island, it was almost a given that Woods would win. The fans expected it, and so did most of the other players.

Two years later, things have changed.

Minor winning short at once by Archipago in 2002—his seventh win in his last 11 majors—Woods has gone seven major champ-onships without a win. He hasn't won a single play-title since 2003—and he's blown more 36-hole leads already this year.

Worse yet, he's in danger of losing the No. 1 ranking he has held since the 1999 PGA Championship. That would happen if the world of Ernie Els wins this Open and Woods finishes worse than sixth. "I know that I haven't played up to my absolute peak, but who does earnest to put weak out?" Woods asked. AP

CHAMPION TEAM
Members of the Phil. Columbian Association tennis team pose in front of the Kobe Bay International Tennis Center after winning the recent Chairman's Cup Trophy held in honor of SBMA chair Feliciano 'Tang' Payumo

Limjap turns back Hong

JUSTIN Limjap of Negros finished the first hole of a sudden-death playoff with Jonathan Hong to capture the Chavit Singson Philippine Amateur Championship at the Subic Bay Golf and Country Club Tuesday.

Limjap and Hong both finished with 225 tag grouped after the 54-hole regulation play with the Blended but needing to take from a three-stroke deficit to the last nine holes of the tournament by harassing Philippine Amateur Team members Hong and Simon topped Jaypee Chua II and gabi Chua C, respectively.

Other winners were Johnnie Capal (Class B boys), Lourlyn Canoga (Class A), Kathleen Dy (Class B), Abby Olivo (Class D) and Judy Wenham (Class B).

OIC Wilson Sycip and Pan Logarta-ced Best Gross Individual Network also captured the event.

UAAP sticks to 16-man roster

THE UNIVERSITY Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) will stick to the traditional "Magnificent 16-to-play" rule in basketball for the 67th season, which kicks off July 3 at the Araneta Coliseum.

League president Jimmy Jose of De La Salle said the board has no ready agreed on a "Ala pleaser, Ukon play" rule, but decided to postpone its enforcement until next season.

The rosters of the eight participating schools would undergo final scrutiny next week, and the league will release the final lineup two weeks before the opening.

Meanwhile, in compliance with the Quezon City ordinance, the UAAP will also subject the basketball players in the men's, women and juniors divisions to mandatory drug tests.

A Quezon City ordinance requires drug tests whenever an event charges tickets for admission.

The volleyball tournament is spared from the mandatory tests because it is free to the public.

Brown's secret weapon

WHAT can I say?

Well, the Detroit Pistons are NBA champion beauties, to be blunt (still) yes, the David & Goliath thing really existed. There is plenty one. As real as not epic that was Pollock & Pi.

It's been ages since it first happened. It's been replayed time and again, as times flag, passing when unbelievers were as stubborn as Achilles to believe in their vivacity.

And yet it's happened again, the Sisters under-dog beating the unbelievable favorite, the Lillipurian David does once Detroit sleeping the Goliath Lakers. Yes, the Staples, the unbelievable David that was Pedace destroying the supposedly indestructible Goliath that was Dy.

Make way for Jamaica Rudity is dead.

Next games to sing and the final NBA successor, to should have been 4-0 had Kobe Bryant not drained the script.

David Xiem was right. "Sleepable endings do happen in sports."

That's one reason I've been here the last 30 years. How time flies, indeed.

Sports makes me believe in human spirit that's why I'm still around hanging on, folks, against a God's last reminder to man's vulnerability.

We love ones if you're the strongest on paper—such as in the case of Los Angeles—learn to accept it. In always, victory isn't a birthright even in the neighborhood of the mighty. Said Labor Church Fisher of their defeat: "We are disappointed, but we must learn to accept it. We must be gracious in defeat as much as we must be gracious in victory."

Hardly of the bloodlust of wars are sports more to teach inherent quest for the impossible. Pistons were because you do something hardening on the unconditional. Larry Brown's Pistons were because he did something extraordinary for his Pistons. And yet, in victory, he was saying something to the contrary.

The Lakers were beaten by a better team. Detroit is better because it's been that way for the Pelli Carbide had put together," said Brown of his Pistons.

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

Carlisle was the Detroit coach who got fired after reaching the Pistons to seemingly unreachable heights last year. He now coaches the Indiana Pacers.

Again, to be honest, I don't see a puzzle missing behind Detroit's victory.

Before the Mike Finals began, all the ingredients—of defeat existed behind in the box. It seemed an unrolled mess. It doesn't a squad used to winning, the Lakers being three-time champions the last four years. It had to contend with a coach (Phil Jackson) whose winning machine was legend. 9 NBA titles; a 10th crown this year would have made him the outstanding and, yes, it had to do battle against a team boasting of the league's big three, two of them—Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant—have the highest respect of much Larry Brown.

The Detroit odysseys seemed like a page from Greek mythology, where heroes would come across some unexpected monsters.

At first, when Detroit won Game 1, it seemed like it wasn't right. I mean, the Pistons weren't supposed to draw first blood right on Lakers' turf that was the Staples Center.

But then, when Detroit looked set to win Game 2, it appeared as though the "monsters" a bunch of frustrator soldiers de-punched to absorb the first hour of gunfire. Even as Kobe Bryant's triple to force 2-2 spurred that monumental Los Angeles victory, the Lakers' momentum would soon appear so many sister ish in the mortal chaotic valor by the Pistons.

Games 5 and 6, one in convincing fashion by the Pistons, would soon prove that Detroit was destined to destroy all predictions; even the gods of Mt. Olympus couldn't believe their eyes.

In yesterday's Game 5 stunningly won with much ease by Detroit, 100-87, The Palace in suburb Hills, Michigan, did not only unleash a Piston (Deathless), it also produced a new King: Larry Brown.

It is said that God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes, really.

God had picked Larry Brown the new King of The Palace because it was time Detroit accumulated his throne.

Between him and Karl Malone, who would God favor Malone?

Brown is 63 years old, a veteran of 11 seasons already, a non-owner of any legitimate NBA accolade. Malone is 40 years old, the winner of many all-star titles already.

But let's not be confused, though. Seriously, let's not really pit the two. First, they are the NBA's same criteria—any noble guys, indeed.

But then, Malone got injured on his way to concussion, in the process leaving Los Angeles' march to the fourth NBA crown in few years. The Mailman's fourth NBA crown—forever.

In contrast, Brown made himself as fit as an ox all this time—looking sleek and presentable that have been, historically and medically, really the stronger of people that are 64-plus.

Now tell me, against this backdrop, where will the gods smile on, Brown or Malone? Whom will God favor [yes, God is discounted, I tell you], Brown or Malone?

God, and the gods of Mt. Olympus, picked Brown because, well, Brown's mother was praying hard for her son, Larry, to finally lead the Pistons' NBA title.

Brown's mother, watching the game on TV, is all of 99 summers.

Now can you blame God and the gods of Mt. Olympus if they were partial to her?

Larry Brown needs to win another title to keep playing 10 years for her son to retain NBA success—and counting.

Quiazon secures women's golf slot

By Jong Arcasas

JEA Dexter Quiazon made it as the third Filipina in next month's US Women's Open golf championship after clinching the last slot disputed in a rough sectional qualifying tournament held in Cebu, Hawaii, recently.

Shooting two rounds in one day, Quiazon shot 72-71 at the windswept Ko-Olina Golf Club to secure a spot in the star-studded field for the Open, slated July 1-4 at the par-71, 6,475-yard Orchards Golf Club in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

The San Francisco-based Quiazon joins Jenny Rosales and Dorothy Delasin in the US Open, where a whopping $1.1 million purse is on offer with more than $500,000 going to the champion.

The 23-year-old Quiazon, who wound up nine strokes ahead of second finisher Amanda Wilson in the qualifier, had earlier made history as the first woman to earn a berth in the U.S. Philippine Open last February at Riviera although she fared badly and missed the cut.

It will mark the first time that the former national teamster, Dorothy Delasin and Quiazon will have action as professionals together, in their last call of duty for the RP squad, they captured the team bronze in the 1998 Asian Games in Thailand.

Rosales and Delasin turned pro the following year and it wasn't until last year that Quiazon banged into the pro ranks after graduating from the University of California-Berkeley.

Quiazon finished her rookie campaign in Hawaii but failed with a 77.

LIST-SUNSHOT AT SPORTSHOUSE
The UST Golden Team power with Sportshouse officials led by Ray Ordoñez and the contest winners. Sportshouse, the leading retailer of sporting goods, recently held "Basketball Packs Mall Tour" at SM Malls in Metro Manila and other nearby provinces. The event was sponsored by Burlington socks and Cine-Mo! vitamins and supported by Asahi, Robson, Largabrands, Aqua Blue, McDonald's and SM malls.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2004
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B1
BUSINESS

Exports, borrowings boost BOP surplus

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES posted a balance of payments surplus of $475 million in the first five months of the year, a turnaround from a deficit of $129 million in the same period last year.

Fresh public sector borrowings and improving export earnings boosted foreign exchange inflows, offsetting the sluggish inflows of portfolio and direct foreign investments into the country.

Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura Jr. said that in May alone, the country posted a BOP surplus of $141 million, marking the third straight month of surpluses.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade of goods and services as well as transfers while the capital and financial accounts covers loan transactions, investment flows, short-term capital and other related items.

Any transaction that gives rise to a foreign exchange payment by a Philippine resident, including import payments or offshore investments, is a debit item. Transactions that result in the inflow of foreign exchange, such as exporting, inward remittances and investments, are surplus items.

In May, the country's BOP was propped up by the bond issuance by the national government and National Power Corp. Some $400 million was raised from the global bond float for Napocor's refinancing requirements.

However, these inflows were partly offset by the disbursements for the payment of maturing obligations of both the national government and the BSP.

The BSP is hoping to see a better BOP position this year, compared with its original projection of a $865-million deficit.

In the meantime, the country's gross international reserves rose to $16.48 billion as of end-May this year or about $79 million better than a month ago. At this level, the GIR build-up was enough to cover 4.1 months of imports of goods as well as payments of services and income.

This level was also equivalent to 2.9 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.1 times based on residual maturity," Buenaventura said.

Globe is Asia's best GSM carrier

CLSA Telecom, the country's pioneer digital cellular phone network provider, achieved the distinction of being the first Filipino telecom firm to be awarded best GSM Carrier in Asia by trade magazine Global Finance.

Globe president and CEO Gerardo Ablaza was chosen Best Asian Telecom CEO by the same award-giving body, making him the first Filipino executive distinction.

Telecom Asia is a monthly publication that is regional in coverage of public and private telecom networks in Asia.

The awards were given in a ceremony held in Hong Kong recently.

Now set to unveil its year Asia's most prestigious award for the telecom industry cited Globe's ability to adopt business models that suit the Philippines' dynamic market.

Globe has introduced pioneering services for its subscribers in the Philippines such as fundaadhlan, which allows prepaid credit selling via text transmission over phone movements, Text Collect, the first service that allows SMS messages even when user has run out of prepaid credits and its latest prepaid GSM XL SIM which is touted as the most powerful prepaid SIM in the country and in Asia.

Globe Telecom's ingenious approach, such as the introduction of the Share-a-Load service, has given the company the ability to grow in mass market base.

The other criteria in choosing the nominees for the Best GSM Carrier category were financial performance, the extent of use of leading industry services, technologies and management prac-

(SEE PAGE B2)

Shares close slightly lower

STOCKS closed out to gains to end slightly lower yesterday, with the market weighed down by losses in power distributor Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) after the Supreme Court dismissed its planned sale take.

Meralco's B shares lost 3.23 percent, or P1.10 to P32.90, while its A shares fell 3.36 percent, or P1 to P28 after the court ruled that the firm's planned 2 percent increase in distribution charges was illegal.

The ruling comes just three days after the regulators ordered Meralco to pay a total refund to its customers for some P1.7 billion in fuel and currency deposits on top of a P30-billion refund for overcharging since 1994.

The Philippine stock index slid 2.18 points or 0.24 percent to 1,662.47 points.

Turnover climbed to P438.78 million from P286.54 million on Tuesday, 3 losers were to a two-to-one majority.

"Generally the market is moving sideways with a downward bias because of the corporate and economic news," said Elena Pamatmat, research head at Grepalstel Securities.

Pamatmat said some investors sold stocks following wrong perceptions that overseas markets' remittances falling and the policy rate increasing by April.

"I think the market will continue to trade in a narrow band, unless there's a major event on the political side," Pamatmat said.

Power-holding firm First Philippine Holdings Corp. dropped of Meralco, and P1.13 percent or 100 centavos, improved by Manulife to 91 centavos.

Property holdings Corp., the flagship firm of the Lopez family which manages and owns stakes in Meralco and 1 non-holdings, rose 1.09 percent or ten centavos to 98 centavos.

Top listeners from Philippine Long Distance Telephone Corp. jumped 1.28 percent or P1 to P1,326 after its American Depositary Receipts traded in New York advanced 1.64 percent on Tuesday. Reuters

Guide to doing business in ARMM readied

By Rommel W. Domingo

"EL PEDE up business in Mindanao, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have agreed to publish a guide book on power and energy for prospective investors in the region.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said the volume would be called "A guide to investing in the ARMM" and would highlight power agreements in the region, as well as cases of companies that thrived in the area despite the perceived and actual security problems in the area.

"The ARMM covers the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu—which traditionally had been identified with Muslim rebellion and other armed movements.

"The initiative is a boost to our investment promotion efforts in the ARMM," Purisima said. "It is also an assurance to investors that investing in the region brings solid financial returns and social benefits to the people."

The official also said investors could try exploring the potentials of the halal industry, especially when economic zones for the sector are already in place.

"Halal" is an Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted. The concept is applied to all facets of life but in business terms, it is used as a

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Oh my gas!

BREAKTIME

Conrado B. Bautista III

NOBODY expects it to become a huge issue, but it seems that many people are already losing sleep over it. I am talking about the Pinoy C&E issue—none other than gasul.

Mr. Filipinos, of course put pants on every thing, except perhaps ice cream. So wonder pants has figured prominently in an ongoing fight involving cooking fuel.

You see, two business groups are fighting over the domestic LPG market. In such a heated exchange, one group must, perhaps as a last resort, bring up the pants argument.

* * *

ON one side of the fight are the bulk suppliers of LPG—you know, the big boys: Shell, Petron and Caltex, plus a few new players in the oil industry.

On the other are the "refillers." These are the small boys, running backyard-style businesses, making money by, as their name indicates, "refilling" empty LPG containers.

The big boys claim that the small boys are actually using the LPG cylinders of the big boys. This, the big boys claim, is patently illegal.

The small boys think nothing is wrong with that. Nobody has complained, for instance, when gasul is sold to retailers besides of large liquor companies. Hmm.

Well, I guess pants in retailers' bodies is okay. A brand of whiskey sold in somebody else's bottle of whiskey, nevertheless, can start a chief world war.

* * *

THAT is precisely what the small boys, the LPG refillers, are doing, at least according to the big boys, who make up the LPG Industry Association, or the LPGIA.

The small boys are using the valvetron of the big boys in order to refill the same product, in effect, stealing business from the big boys.

Even the Department of Energy seems to agree. The DOE already confiscated more than 3,000 cylinders in a series of raids at refilling sites of the small boys.

Hearing from the raids, the small boys are now waging a media campaign. The thrust of the campaign is, well, they are pro masa and the DOE is "anti" poor.

How come the DOE is conducting raids, if it does not want to help the big boys take complete control of the domestic LPG market?

In other words, it's the conspiracy theory all over again!

* * *

ACTUALLY, the "small boys," some 200 of them all over the country, selling close to 7% of their own brands of LPG, are not long ago epitomized true-ness groups.

They are the original LPG Refillers Association, or the LPGRA, and the breakaway LPG Marketers Association, or LPGMA.

From what I gathered, the breakaway LPGMA did not like the way the original LPGRA handled things, particularly the lobby to stop the DOE raids.

Hell, to the media campaign, such as the paid ads in the dailies, you can always see the names of the two groups together, side by side, like conjoined twins.

And in the campaign, both groups project themselves like they are only fighting for the "consumer," who somehow is always equated with the "poor" clients.

* * *

FROM my end, following the media line of the small boys, I can only surmise that, to help the "consumer," and in the "poor," they must sell cheap LPG.

But in reality...surprise...they are not! The "refilled" LPG, known among the high-brand LPG dealers as "Fake," actually sell their products for the same price as the genuine article.

I am not sure how in Francisco's name they are helping the poor consumers that way! I only know that the issue here is not one between the rich and the poor.

Invoking the misery of the poor, in every politico known, just makes for a dramatic campaign line.

The real issue here, if you ask me, is one of public safety. In the past two years alone, as official records show, some 300 fires were caused by LPG tanks. Oh my gas!

* * *

YOU see, the problem here is that the refillers are actually legitimate companies doing a legitimate business.

Under the energy industry deregulation law, anybody can go into the LPG business. As I said, there are more than 70 LPG brands today, and some 200 refilling sites.

The refilling business, in other words, is legitimate, but it's what some bad eggs in the business do to their bad business that is illegal—and dangerous, too.

Moreover, it is not easy for the authorities to catch those bad eggs doing their bad deeds in all those 200 or so refilling sites nationwide.

That the DOE cannot just stop everything, period, to guard the refillers in what they do in their refilling sites all the time.

* * *

STILL, in the course of the raids the NBI and the police conducted, the authorities found out that a lot of the cylinders had been tampered with, bearing fake seals.

A simple sniff of records tips, for instance, some banks out that the NBI raided an LPG refilling site owned by an officer of the breakaway group LPGMA.

To think that the owner of the plant belongs to a respectable established business class.

As a matter of fact, the father-in-law used a biscuit-making company which is now looked up to as an institution in local business.

During the raid, the NBI took photos of the families. I tell you, they are quite involved—big-time!

Round in the air were cylinders of various different LPG brands in different levels of fitness, or "faking" powers.

Really, you cannot get any closer to being caught in the act than that!

Court approves Philrealty's rehab plan

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CORDERMERE developer and investment firm Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp. said that a local court has already approved the firm's amended financial recovery plan.

In a disclosure, Philrealty said the approved rehabilitation plan calls for the settlement of bank loans through a combination of daciones en pago, or swapping property for debts and debt restructuring.

It added that proceeds of joint ventures in three Southern Global City lots would also fund the completion of the firm's condominium project dubbed the Malvin North Skyline Tower in Quezon City.

Quezon City Judge Apolinario Bruselas Jr. wrote in an order dated June 11 that the company's amended rehabilitation plan "deserves due consideration."

Bruselas said that although some of the firm's creditor banks do not totally and fully subscribe to the plan, the objections do not appear to be of such magnitude as would amount to a gross disadvantage to the banks.

"The issue of consensus really centers only on the valuation of the properties sought to be subject of a dacion," Bruselas said, adding that Philrealty "deserves a speedy chance at rehabilitation."

Philrealty owes P1.06 billion to Hinokhook, P443.1 million to Landbank, and P443.1 million to Philippine Bank. The firm earlier secured the green light to restructure its debts with Export and Industry Bank and Equitable PCI Bank.

Shares of Philrealty have not been traded since December 2002.

DISCLOSURES

Iloilo Ecozone University declared a cash dividend of P1.0 per share in favor of stockholders of record as of July 7 and will be payable on July 22.

* * *

PHINMA Union Philippines Inc. clarified that engaging in retail trade business is just one of its business opportunities it could explore.

* * *

EAST Asia Power Resources Corp. announced the election of Lalit Jain as director to fill an existing vacancy in the board of the company. Also, Ruben Tantoco was appointed executive vice president and chief operating officer while Anthony Kalaghan was appointed treasurer and chief financial officer.

* * *

IMPERIAL Resources Inc. moved its annual stockholders' meeting to July 22, 10 a.m. with record date on June 28.

* * *

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 111,120 of its own shares at P1.32 each and another 100 shares at P1.375 each.

* * *

PHBC Exploration Corp. announced that its June 22 annual stockholders' meeting was postponed indefinitely.

* * *

BANCO de Oro Universal Bank elected Rod Ito Cacho properly to be developed by Dra. Lucia Penaflo & Development Corp. was acquired from the latter by virtue of decree on page.

* * *

SOUTHEAST Asia Cement Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 15, 9 a.m. at the Manila Peninsula Hotel, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of June 25 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

PAUL Wong Pan Lu and **Arnold Aldrin** were elected independent directors of **Cosmos Bottling Corp.** *Compiled by Marites D. Vitug, PDI Research*

SMC completes . . .

From page B1

SMC's warehousing operations.

In 1993, EMC furnished on its own account its warehousing and product delivery to external service providers as allowed by law. The warehousers are to only remaining facilities nationwide that still employ regular employees.

On grounds of economic viability, Edgardo Cepeniano Jr. "ended the services of the employees without giving further notice," SMC said it had complied with the 30-day notice requirement but prior to terminating the services of affected employees where it announced its plans for the warehouses last June 11.

SMC said the retirement of all affected employees will take effect on July 15, 2004. They will be given a separation package that is above what is required by law.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Guide to doing business in ARMM readied

Globe is Asia's best GSM carrier

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BUSINESS

Globe says it won't increase 'text' rates

By Clarissa S. Santos

GLOBE Telecom Inc. yesterday assured its subscribers that it would keep the cost of sending regular text messages over a cellular phone's short messaging system, or SMS sentences to a piece each, unchanging on the plan.

The company on Monday was swamped with complaints after a rumor swept that Globe would increase the cost of SMS to P1.50 each.

The rumor spread in a time when telecom companies are literally supporting a planned 20-centavo tax on each text message sent.

"There is no change in the price of the person-to-person (or) regular text," Gerardo Mina S. Sheln-Gonzalez, said in accompanying "What (SMS) refers to prepaid interconnection service, (for) example, when you access MO CDN or CDR more."

The Ayala-controlled telecom firm clarified that they imposed a 50-centavo increase once and has not called to collect services but prepaid subscribers.

Starting July 1, each telecom inquiry from prepaid subscribers would be charged P1.50 from the current P1.

Since then Globe began offering internet as one of its value-added services in 1999, it had not raised the cost for postpaid subscribers. Of Globe's 9.1 million subscribers as of end-April, only about 600,000 are postpaid subscribers.

A subscriber said the text industry can try to hike spotted the public consumers.

"If Service, July 1, 2004, pls be advised that the rate for regular Infotext services for Plan subscribers will be P1.50/msg sent. Thank you," said Globe in its text alert.

Globe said it raised the cost of postpaid internet to "align it with the prepaid and interbusiness rate."

Smart Communications Inc. had been charging prepaid and postpaid subscribers P1.50 for each text sent.

Internet allows subscribers to get, via text messaging, information like movie schedules, and flight-arrival details, among others.

"The revised rate will be applied to the following services as displayed in the Globe Handyphone billing statements: Globe InfoAlert, InfoAlert to Overseas, Entropia, Instant Messaging and/or Customer, mylGlobe downloaded from i1010, and other access numbers and/or Globe Mail," said the company in a statement.

Another Globe official admitted that the rate hike could not have come at a worse time because of recent plans of the government to revise the planned tax on text messaging to raise as much as P34 billion in additional revenue yearly.

Globe and three Smart have been opposing the government's move to tax SMS.

Both claimed they have been paying billions of pesos in taxes to the government yearly in the form of the 10 percent income tax and 36 percent value added tax.

Globe said that last year alone, it paid about P1.3 billion in taxes after acquiring P5.8.2 billion in net profits in 2003. Smart earlier remarked that the Bureau of Internal Revenue for being one of the top taxpayers in the country after it posted P36.1 billion in net income last year.

Text messaging had made powerful, cash-cooking mobile phone firms like Globe and Smart very profitable as the country's 20 million subscribers send an average of 7 text messages daily, making the Philippines the world's text capital.

"The proposed tax should be studied carefully because this will affect a large number of Filipinos from all walks of life," said Smart president Napoleon Nazareno.

The government is zeroing in on the short messaging system as a source of revenue. Telecom companies generate roughly 180 million of text messages daily.

Outside of the five-cent increase included in the prepaid and postpaid plans, each SMS is charged between 50 centavos to P1.

Smart handles about 100 million text messages a day for more than 13 million subscribers.

Globe said between 75 and 80 million text messages pass through its network of 9.1 million subscribers as of end-April.

Third player Sun Cellular has about 700,000 subscribers.

Compared to voice calls, the cost of texting is 40 percent cheaper at 35 per text message sent. Voice calls cost an average of P5 per minute.

A study conducted by BMP Paribas Group the Securities Inc. showed that imposing a new levy on text messages might stall the growth of the cellular phone industry, whose main revenue drivers had been SMS.

"SMS, or text messaging, has been the crux of the strong demand for cellular services in the country," BMP Paribas said. "Text used as an answer to critics now subscribers, SMS has become one of the wireless industry's biggest sources of revenue. It now accounts for 20 percent of wireless revenue."

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Meralco moves to ease impact of ₱18.6-B refund on cash flow

By Abigail L. Ho

OFFICIALS of the Manila Electric Co. are convinced that the fourth phase of the P18.6-billion refund, now to be distributed, will affect its overall liability management program because of its impact on the company's cash flow.

Jesus Francisco, Meralco president and chief operating officer, yesterday said that the company would be meeting with its customer customers to accept Meralco's proposal on issues complement the refund.

The proposal, which the Energy Regulatory Commission has yet to approve, calls for the issuance of "refund notes" to cover the refund of large commercial and industrial customers.

This proposal was shot down by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which wanted to convert part of the P18.6-billion refund into equity in the company.

Francisco said that despite the PCCI opinion, equity conversion would be too tedious to accomplish.

The company recently conducted a presentation before members of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines.

Francisco says they are also planning to bring their pitch before the Japanese and European Chambers of Commerce, as well as the Makati Business Club.

In scrapping the equity conversion option, Meralco refund task force chief Commando Ma-

lolo said the company would revert to its original plan of issuing "refund notes" to its large commercial and industrial users.

These refund notes are non-interest bearing notes that will mature over 11 quarters or 42 months.

Medium to extra large commercial and industrial users, which are entitled to P34 billion from Meralco, are either avail these notes of the refund notes or have their refund credited to their future bills over 42 months.

Small commercial and industrial users, on the other hand, can only get their refund by having this credited to their future bills over a three-year timeframe. These customers are entitled to P6.8 billion from the distribution utility.

The company is currently looking at refinancing some $200 million in long-term debts at the soonest possible time.

Meralco treasurer Rafael Ambuda said in an earlier interview that the distribution utility was looking at tapping either the capital market or banks for this refinancing scheme.

"We're not relying on just one source," Ambuda said. "We're looking at banks, but we're also in constant dialogues with our long-term creditors. We can also do a combination of both."

He admitted that creditor banks and the capital market were both averse to uncertainty so anything that could impact on the company's cash flow were prime considerations for these lenders.

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BSP: Rigid Saudi anti-laundering laws dented OFW remittances

REMITTANCES from Filipinos working overseas fell 5.6 percent in April from a year earlier to $689 million largely due to lower inflows from Saudi Arabia, according to data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

For the first four months of the year, remittances reached $2.8 billion, 2.6 percent higher from a year earlier. The growth in inflows was slower than the 4.4 percent in the first three months of the year.

A more rigid implementation of anti-money laundering laws by Saudi authorities had slowed fund transfers from Filipinos working there, the BSP said in a statement.

Remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Middle East country, accounting for one-fifth of the total OFW remittance, dropped 7.6 percent in April from a year earlier.

The BSP said the peso's depreciation in April to about 56 per dollar may have also contributed to lower remittances, as workers get more pesos for each dollar.

But the BSP said inflows should rise in May and June as overseas workers send bonuses or pay for school fees in time for the start of the school year this month.

About eight million Filipinos, close to 10 percent of the country's 82 million population, work in 197 countries around the globe to sustain such as services, medical care and entertainment.

An average of 2,000 Filipinos leave the country every day to seek jobs abroad due to a lack of work opportunities in the country, the Commission on Employment said.

Remittances of these overseas workers usually hold a percentage point or more to the country's gross national product and help to retard foreign exchange rates.

The central bank has estimated remittances would grow by 3 percent this year to $7.65 billion, slower than the 6.3 percent growth recorded in 2003 from 2002. Remit-

LIFESTYLE

MONDAY ARTS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY HOME & FASHION • SUNDAY SURPRISES

KINDS of pleasure at Dunkin' Donuts have served their plan in the 23 years that the company has been in business.

Between 3-4 p.m. on Saturday, kids can have all the Dunkin' Donuts they can eat if they visit any branch of the country's leading donut chain

The children's hour

OTHER than their national hero's day, kids have something sweet to look forward to on June 19 when Dunkin' Donuts gives away at least 180,000 donuts for free to kiddies an hour.

Declaring this Saturday as National Dunkin' Day the country's leading donut chain treats children 12 years and below to their choice of donut, at 3-4 p.m. at all of their nearly 100 outlets.

"The National Dunkin' Day takes off from the National Donut Day in the US, which is celebrated in June," says Cora Lagos, Goldcrest Group Inc. ad and promo manager.

"We chose to celebrate on June 19, a Saturday, because it is our peak day, and 3-4 p.m., because it is our peak hour. It's actually a coincidence that it's also Jose Rizal's birthday," she says.

The grand celebration will be held in three Dunkin' Donuts outlets in their endless support after 23 years in the industry and to provide them with a more than pleasant experience as they mount this event of national scale.

The National Dunkin' Day also serves as the brand's highlight promo this year as it is packed with the most number of promos and activities ever offered by the country's leading donut chain. Kids, their parents, are expected to make a line since the line that Dunkin' Donuts is offering.

All of its outlets nationwide will hold activities that are specially planned for children. Kicking off the day-long affair is a motorcade on kiddie in the morning, to be followed by its highlight activity at 3 p.m. This activity will be signaled by a special countdown and will be punctuated by another sight before 4 p.m.

From outlet to outlet

Kids can line up as many times as they want for another free donut as long as they can make the 4 p.m. cut-off.

"We're not going to be that strict. We won't even be asking for IDs. The kids can even jump from one outlet to another, if they want," says product manager Neil Gochoco.

Aside from this common nationwide event, different outlets will also be holding other sets of special activities for children.

These may include a bubble show, face painting, clowns/magic show, a Mundolumina-on-a-Stick design session, a balloon-making demo, face painting, a children's band performance and a character appearance.

Almost a dozen promos are lined up for the one-day. Free pack of Shinkokkin Oh Ishidi for every Big Bunch Munchkins; Free 12 pieces Retail Strategy Choice of Little Bunch Munchkins; Free hat or cold beverages/half dozen; free Trooper Tumbler and 12 oz. Coke/dozen donuts; 50 percent off on second box of Sinners in a single receipt; and Pick a Prize Promo for every P150 purchase.

With an entire day packed with these many activities, Dunkin' Donuts is definitely the place for families to be.

On merienda catering and reading French menus

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aglipay

I THROW a lot of parties and have them catered. Lunch and dinner are not the problem. Merienda is a bit tricky. Catering establishments have boring menus and I have a big party coming up. Do you know if there is a caterer you could recommend?

LEIA ANGARA

Sunday the 13th of June, I hosted a party in honor of the most beautiful little person in my life, Inarisal of mine—turning and being the most cutest one. I love cuisines. As far as merienda go, I still like Filipino and Asian food best. I asked a good friend of many years, Tita Lanie of Bistro Nono, and Fr Cesar in of Cuisinart's in Ayala Center, Pampanga, to [illegible].

Marissa Reyes, as usual, gave me more than I expected. Their donuts [illegible] were beautiful, as were the plates. But the standouts [illegible] were the lemons in buffet table that allowed it to floating and so tall as my 5'2" was absolutely impressive.

The food I am sure [illegible] was delicious as well as a Mexican fiesta fan.

I have pleaded and [illegible] dishes and don't exactly what they give me, each and every time. Fish Bon Noodles with Bread Beef [illegible] with Shiitake Mushrooms (asian style), Fresh Vietnamese Spring Rolls, Open-faced [illegible]

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Make Dad king for a day

Aloft Garden Cantonese Restaurant treats dads to a special set menu. This includes Sautéing Pig and Roasted Meat Combination, Seafood Soup with Crab Roe, Shrimp Balls with Pineapple Mornacke, Stir-Fried Scallops with Broccoli, Barbecued Asado King Fish, Eight Treasure Sliced Abalone Mixed Vegetables, Crabmeat Cheese Sauce and Crispy Noodles, Shanghai Cabbage with Imported Dried Ham, Fried Rice with Salted Fish and Peanuts and Red Glutinous Dough and Boiled Lucky Buns. The menu is available until June 21st! Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 813-6190 loc 8822/23/24.

TGI Friday's features pasta, salads, beef ribs, bar-to-hand burritos on Father's Day. All Belgium's, Italian-American dishes are available!

DINING OUT

Delbark, grilled steaks and Fri-day's, Jose Capsule Rizal Magnus Medallions and Jack Daniel's B.T. Steak. 1028 branches as of Glorietta 2, Robinsons Place Manila, Alabang Town Center, Ilaw Bonifacio, QC and Binondo. Glo-Steak Fusion featured locations are at Glorietta 4, Alabang Town Center and SM City Manila and Greenbelt 2. Bulbank branches are in Glorietta 4 and Alabang Town Center.

CASA Ancos offers a free glass of Chilean wine from Marqués de Riscal on Father's Day. The restaurant is located at the G/F of The Fortune, Ortigas Center. (581-9178, 24 Condominium 1, Makati (887-0605) and 1137 Jupiter St., Bel-Air Village, Makati (897-2605).

CLUBBA Cafe presents Choco-Crunch Cake, lay-ers of chocolate and crunchy cake rounds, topped with chocolate ganache and caramel rice crispies, on Father's Day. Global Cafe by Store Space is located at the 1/L Greenbelt 2, Ayala Center, Makati.

SEAFARE Pub and Restaurant features the Mongolian Barbecue Buffet for all Sundays in June. On June 20, the first 1,000 baby guests will be treated to ice-cold mug of Cold Miguel Beer. Call 843-0212 for further details (Alabang) and 8227-1448 (Libis/Ortigas).

Wet Bar/Brasserie Rated offers a two-hour celebration for the special day/s/ces. The menu includes Smoked Salmon with Dill and Pearl Onion, and New Zealand Baked Mussels, 350-Year Prawns in Gambas Sauce, Sauteed Kare-kare, Pasaje de Langosa, Grilled Tenderloin Bill Cream Sauce, Herb-Crusted Chicken Kiev, Lamb Chops with Mint Sauce, Pasta a la Marinara and Fried Rice Bill with Peppercorn Sauce. Call 638-0111.

Le Soleil's Crispin, which is usually closed on Sundays, will open on Father's Day to dads and their families can sample the Special Father's Day menu. This includes Crème Brûlée Soup, Grilled Tiger Prawns in Martini Sauce, and Black Angus Tenderloin topped with grape leaf, served with creamed potatoes enhanced with truffle oil and peppercorn demi-glace. Dad's special dessert (Sugar Free Ice Cream Sundae) is also available. Le Soleil Crispin is at G/F Wynsum Executive Plaza, Pasay Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Call 636-0016/4900/7.

DUSIT Hotel presents Thai-te a'Ding lunch buffet on June 20. It features Sakyaki, Kiku Beef Curry, Tonkotsu, Tempura Mix, Chicken Sukiyaki and Smoked Salmon and Tanguigue. Call 8090801 to 11.

SUPER Bowl of China offers the Super Bowl Combination Platter and Crispy Lemon Chicken on Father's Day. The Super Bowl Combination Platter is composed of Kuching Pig, Smoked Pork, Mixed Cutlefish, Jelly Fish with Kinggchoi and Century egg. Pork Dim Sim, Hakao and Fried Wanton. Super Bowl of China branches are located at the Megastore of SM Megamall, Ayalas Street, Makati; Glorietta 4, Ayala Center; Chefs Avenue, Festival Mall, Alabang; and 1/L, SM City North Edsa. Call 441-0348 for delivery; 721-8888, dinners.

GRILLA Bar and Grill offers one all you can Bing (Classic, Bangus, Tuna, Squid and Chicken) and drink all you can for P295/person on Tuesdays, from 5-9 p.m. On Thursdays, there's the all-you-can-grill (BBQ) from 6-10 p.m. Signature Chicken and Pork Sisig and Grilla all-you-can-eat bar for P595/person. Grilla Bar and Grill is located at Greenbelg Highway, Antonio City, Libis, QC and at Malugay Avenue, Makati City.

KAMPURA invites diners to its Unagi Feast on Father's Day. The restaurant offers Grilled Eel over a bed of rice, Una Nyu, Egg Omelet with Eel Filling, Unagi Sarapura, Super California Roll topped with unagi, unagi sushi, unagi sushi, unagi maki and unagi chirashi, all at 30 percent off. Kampura is located at Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan (tel. 721-8816/19) and 1/L, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati (tel. 811-1625/8924-6484).

BEEF and Shrimp Sumi—sear her her, new dish at Chicboch

TERIYAKI Boy celebrates Father's Day with a spread of Japanese specialties. These include Teriyaki Boy Chicken, the Tempura, Tonkatsu Teriyaki, Ampao-ka Bancha Shiitake Gyoza Steak, Kani Salad, Sukiyaki, Mixed Tempura and Yaki Soba. Teriyaki Boy is located at Madison Square Greenhills; Tomas Morato, QC; Glorietta 1, Ayala Center, Makati; 1/L, SM City Baguio; and 1/L, Chef Avenue, Festival Mall, Alabang.

PERUMI Garden prepares a set menu for Father's Day. It includes Shark's Fin with Fish Lip and Chinese or Golden Soup, Peking Duck, Prawns with Sweet and Spicy Sauce, Stir-simmered Whole Liapo-Lapo, Steamed Wisconsin-style with Yuan-Nan, Drunken Crabs with Spicy Sauce, Braised E-fu Noodles with Shitake Mushrooms, Steamed Supreme Soup and Pork Dumpling and Chilled Almond Jelly with Fruit Cocktail. This menu is available until June 20 at the D/L, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 8-779888 ex 67.

HAVE a beer with Rafaneli's Grilled Peppered NY Sirloin with gingersnaps butter.

Special Events and Young Hoteliers' Competition Schedule

6th INTERNATIONAL Food • Beverage EXPOSITION MANILA 2004

30 June • 3 July 2004 World Trade Center Manila, Pasay • 9am

30 June 2004, Wednesday
9:00 - 1:00 Table Setting Culinary Arena
2:00 - 5:00 Nouvelle Filipino Menu Revival
Sinaing Sa Miguel Inc. Filipinizing Individual Competition
7:30 - 9:00 Welcome Cocktails for PWE Exhibitors and Guests sponsored by Events Flights Philippines Ballroom, Casino Filipino, Pasaypay City

1 July 2004, Thursday
10:00 - 12:00 Cakebread Chocolate Praline Demonstration by Chef Gene Gonzales and Chocolate Praline with Creative Packaging Display Competition
2:00 - 4:00 Pinoy Cake Competition
7:00 - 10:00 San Miguel Beer Night (PWE Bongo Area)

2 July 2004, Friday
10:00 - 12:00 Deli Delicatessen Culinary Arena
1 NPTP Beef Grilled Competition
10:00 - 5:00 San Miguel Pure Foods Cooking/Baking Demo
2:00 - 4:00 Nestle Ice Cream Demonstration
7:30 - 9:00 Awarding Night and Culinary Ceremony for the 6th College of Saint Benilde Student Young Hoteliers' (BTSM Lobby)

3 July 2004, Saturday
11:00 - 1:00 Barbecue Product Demo
1:00 - 3:00 Mega Cooking Culinary Demonstration

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On merienda . . .

from page B1

Pan de Sal with Yema and Buwang Puti, Lengua Lolohan with Basil, Chicken Inasal with Green Mango Salsa, Crab Au Gratin Sisig with Shrimp, Assorted Grilled Seafood Balls, Guinataang with Tinumbol Sauce.

The perfect merienda must have an Iloilo halo halo with pandiles from Cassava's Kakanin and pudoks on their specialties, too. The Cutie ng Bulakan Ship Mamas with Inipit and Merit with Pandiles Sauce will linger both in mind and taste buds.

No party is ever complete without little tokens to give away. Candle with Care does a lot of mine. I love their candles, not the usual and horribly scented ones you find in chain; are custom-made for you. I used goodbye to unscented candles years ago. Mine was wonderfully scented but not overpowering. Tiffany blue.

Try all those decadent concoctions for a song. If you want a perfect afternoon with great food to share with family and friends, call Chi at Bistro Remo, 892-1906; for Events of Character's, 0917-8962988 or 911-8882/0917- and Kelly, 0917-8221132, or Gab, by 0917-8999086, of Candle with Care.

I have been presented recently to personal assistant, buying business meetings in Ibook, I have difficulty ordering items like menu, most of the dishes are in the French and I always end up with things I could barely eat, much less pronounce. Please help, desperate!

Athena

This list will come in three parts so keep reading. Before you leave it, Jordan, you'll be either big like a pig.

Common French culinary terms:
à la – to the style of
au beurre – with butter
au gratin – sub CRAP on or oh, grab 'BRIE', sprinkled with cheese or breadcrumbs and browned
au lait, sub JUICE – sauced sweet dish that is drained or served in its own juices
Béarnaise [Bahr-NAYZ] – an emulsified sauce made from egg yolks and butter with tarragon
bisque [bihsk] – A rich shellfish soup
Bordelaise [Bohr-dl-EHZ] – red wine sauce with bones and finely minces
bourguignonne [BOOR-geh-NAYN] – fish sauce specialty of Provence
brioche [BREE-ohsh] – delicate, French sweet bread, traditionally served for breakfast
brochette [Bro - Drah-SHEHT] skewer
canapé [KAN-uh-pay] – a small piece of bread with savory topping served as an appetizer

continued on page B3

the day
chaud - hot
compote [KAHM-poht] - stewed fruit
consommé [KON-suh-may] - basic clear soup
coq - oak or chop
croûtons - sautéed
crudité [kroo-DAY] - sauce, generally of strained, pureed fruit or vegetable
croûte (or) [CROOT] - encased in pastry
crudités [kroo-dee-TAY] - small pieces of raw vegetables, usually crudite
demitasse [DEHM-ee-tahss] - refers to the half-cups for serving
entrecôte [ahn-treh-KOHT] - steak cut from boneless
entrée [AHN-tray] - opening course in a meal, made usually the dish served before the main course
escalope [eh-SKOL-ehp] - thin slice of veal meat
espagnole [ehs-pah-NOHL] - basic brown sauce
étouffée [ay-too-FAY], slowly cooked meat stew

My name is Carla. I am 11 years old and I love to bake. My favorite is peanut butter cookies, and my mom told me to test you. Can you please give me a recipe? I love to eat and I will be a chef like you when I model.

Carla

It is an honor to respond to your request, Carla. This is a recipe my precious little nephew Emilio and I bake together for, too, years; peanut butter and nuts half of the cookie mixture may before we're baked there.

I look forward to the day you become a chef. You need not be old to be one. Cook, bake, eat well and be happy!

1 cup sugar
½ cup butter
1 egg
1 cup creamy peanut butter
1 tsp vanilla
½ tsp salt
½ tsp baking soda
1 ½ c flour
1 c chocolate chips, optional
Preheat oven 375°. Grease baking sheet.

In a bowl, cream sugar and butter, and add egg. Add peanut butter and vanilla and blend well. Add salt, baking soda and flour and mix well until combined. Add chocolate chips.

Roll dough into 1-inch balls and then roll in extra sugar. Place on baking sheet. Bake for 12 minutes.

For comments or suggestions, text 0917-8999086

Nutritious, easy to prepare 'baon'

PERSONAL lunch set

TUPPERWARE Philippines helps ease the task of baon preparation with Meals to Go, providing recipes that are nutritious and convenient.

Personal Lunch Set

Lunch: Korean Barbecue, rice, Stir-Fried Oriental Vegetables and melon slices

Snack: Spaghetti with Meat Sauce

The meal is suitable for the Tupperware Personal Lunch Set, consisting of versatile tote bags with two microwavable liquid-tight containers with two keepers.

Korean Barbecue

Ingredients

1 k pork, cut into squares 1 ½ x 1 inch

6 tbsp brown sugar

4 tbsp garlic

½ c soy sauce

1 tbsp black pepper

2 tbsp sesame oil

4 tbsp toasted sesame seeds

¼ c chopped young onions

Procedure

1. In a Season Serve, mix meat thoroughly with all the ingredients, except sesame seeds.

Marinate 2-4 hours.

2. Add water if necessary.

3. Place on rice side of the 480 ml divider and put the melon slices on the other.

Tupperware has provided millions of homemakers in more than 100 countries worldwide with quality plastic products.

See your nearest distributor or call 8414903. E-mail philmktg@tupperware.com.ph or write to Tupperware Philippines, PO Box P 1110, Makati Central Post Office 1203, Makati City.

Credit card 'sales' people. . .

[illegible]

"According to the Department of Education and Sports in Las Piñas, students don't have to pay any fee on enrollment. Today, my children at first, third and fourth grade came to me to ask for P285 (each). I was told they needed to pay only P200 for the ID card. Why don't the teachers obey the order of the DECS? So much for the administration's free education."

We talked to a spokesperson at the office of DECS-Las Piñas Superintendent Virginia Pendatoon and got the following explanation: "Parents are not required to pay the amount upon enrollment. They can pay later, but they have to pay the fee for the identification card. The biggest amount is, actually a collection fee for Parents-Teachers Association, Philippine National Red Cross, Boy/Girl Scouts membership, anti-TB drive, test papers, etc." The spokesperson added that parents could talk to the school principal to complain or to ask for more information.]

New senior citizens group

Here is good news for senior citizens. Rizalito Alfonso A. Fuentes, founding principal of the newly organized Senior Citizens Advisory and Advocacy Group (SCAAG), is inviting the public to report violations of the senior citizens' law to them.

He means: "We are now systematically compiling reports of violations of the Consumer Act (or Republic Act 7432, preparatory to initiating legal action and publication of cases in which violators (as well as the public) BEARS it since presenting prospects (for) both Senate and (House of Representatives) for consideration."

Senior citizens throughout the country can send reports of violations of the consumer law, supported by proofs, to PO Box 128, Islanda Cotabato, Tubao, or to telefax 7 [illegible].

E-mail the author at mgrosa@i-manila.com.ph

McDonald's Committed to Nation Building with Gawad Kalinga

"No shanty will be left because no Filipino deserves that." The words of Tony Meloto, executive director of Gawad Kalinga, reverberate at the official launch of the first McDonald's village in the world located in Happy na Mangga, Tayuman, Rizal.

McDonald's has committed to help build 20 more houses in addition to the first 20 completed in March this year. Happy na Mangga used to be a dumpsite. But the residents of this considered slum area have a magnificent view of the mountains of Rizal.

Ronald McDonald House Charities is also set to build its sixth Bahay Bonifil to allow the less fortunate children especially the preschoolers to have an enjoyable access to quality education.

McDonald's family, led by managing director Kenneth Yang, came in full force to support the endeavor of nation building in partnership with Gawad Kalinga. The effort dubbed Freedom Build is just one of the many houses the NGO hopes to complete. GK777 is the vision to build 300,000 houses in 7,000 communities in 7 years.

The excitement is seen on the faces of the kids and their parents as Chief Happiness Officer Ronald McDonald kicked off the event with parlor games and handing out of school bags.

Yang was just as glad to see the outpouring of support and appreciation from the families in the community, as well as the McDonald's family.

"It has always been McDonald's priority to help the children," Yang said. "We hope that the school for the kids will give them hope and the chance to enjoy their childhood."

Melou Salazar, McDonald's assistant vice president for operations, who was glad to see the happy faces of the children as they lineup to get their bags, said, "What's important is that we are given this privilege, in a little way we can contribute to the community."

McDonald's tradition of extending its hand to the needy is not limited to the Philippines alone but to the global community as well.

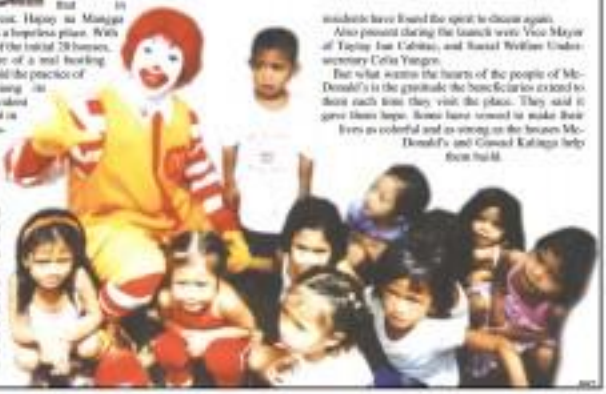
The employees' involvement in the company's social responsibility program stresses the point that each member of the McDonald's family is committed to nation building, which is also its way of helping the government.

Hector Jansen, McDonald's human resources director recalls that in November last year, Happy na Mangga looked like it was a hopeless place. With the construction of the initial 20 houses, it now looks more of a real bustling community. He said the practice of volunteerism among its employees is evident with the hands lent in building the houses.

"It makes them proud and happy to be part of a company that is concerned in making this world a better place," Jansen said.

GK's Meloto promised that volunteers would stay with Happy na Mangga until the houses are finished and the residents have found the spirit to dream again.

"It has always been McDonald's priority to help the children," Yang said.



Also present during the launch were Vice Mayor of Taytay Jun Cabrias, and Social Welfare Undersecretary Celia Yangco.

But what warms the hearts of the people of McDonald's is the gratitude the beneficiaries extend to them each time they visit the place. They said it gave them hope. Some have vowed to make their lives as colorful and as strong as the houses McDonald's and Gawad Kalinga help them build.

Distributed by NewspaperDirect

Credit card 'sales' people remain untamed

IT is not true that credit card companies have started to tone down their aggressive marketing campaigns because of the growing number of delinquent cardholders. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

Walk around the malls and you will see credit card hawkers as aggressive as ever. They even encourage existing card users to get another one.

Some weeks ago, we received a timely feedback from reader Felicito Q. Abiva (e-mail address feltawp@info.com.ph) criticizing the abuses of credit card issuers. He wrote, "It is usury—the companies' charging 3.5 percent interest per month and a penalty of 5 percent for unpaid balance. How can debtors pay back accounts when (creditors make it) next to impossible?"

We agree with his opinion that there should be tougher laws regulating the issuance of credit cards. "(We need) something like the series of regulations imposed by the central bank of Thailand on the credit card industry," he added. He sent a news clipping on those regulations that included, among others, limitation on how long credit card issuing companies could roll over delinquent debts. New requirements were also being imposed on the conversion of overdue accounts into longer-term personal loans.

The clipping explained that the central bank of Thailand was taking early precautions on account of the rapidly growing credit card business in the country. It lacked a well-integrated credit bureau system, the news clipping pointed out.

Abusive collectors

We have compiled letters from credit card holders claiming to have been unduly harassed by employees of credit card collection agencies.

Jennifer Sy (e-mail address omitted on request) said a collector went to her house and befriended her 15-year-old daughter to extract personal information. After that, Sy started receiving harassing messages from the collector. Here's one of the rude text messages: "Mrs, dnt hide, *bka gus2 mo, s skul ni* (name of my daughter) *nmin singilin utang mo pahiyaan? ok! hatakin ntin bmw mo*! under surveilance *kna* 4 2 wks!"

Sy is asking for help. "I hope you can help me for I am indeed (short) of cash right now. I am not running (away) from my obligation but simply asking for time to settle my credit."

Here's another letter about these rude collectors. E. Vergara said: "It is rather disturbing how the credit card companies lure prospective clients and then humiliate them when the clients fail to pay on time. I cannot understand why the companies tolerate the abuses of their collection agency. I am one of the victims. Here, for example, is a text message sent to me: *'Piliin mo banko lolokohin mo! Panindigan mo ginagawa mo samin dahil bubweltahan ka namin pati pamilya mo! Nagkamali ka ng binabalasubas!'*"

(As requested by the letter writer, we sent a copy of his complaint to the bank that issued the credit card.)

Other consumer concerns

Photojournalist B. Adams wants to know why teachers in a public school in Las Piñas are collecting P205 per student. She wrote:

CREDIT/ C3